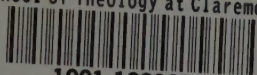


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LESSONS FOR DAILY LIFE FROM
THE OLD TESTAMENT.

BEING A SERIES OF
Sermons and Addresses to Working Men.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES LEACH, D.D.

AUTHOR OF

"SERMONS TO WORKING MEN," "HOW I REACHED THE MASSES,"
"THE ROMANCE OF RELIGIOUS BEGGING," "OLD FRIENDS,"
"LAMPS AND LIGHTS," "HOMEWARD BOUND,"
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TO

JOSEPH PETERS, ESQ.,

OF LONDON,

AS A SMALL TRIBUTE OF THE ESTEEM IN WHICH

I HOLD HIM,

I RESPECTFULLY DEDICATE

This Book.

PREFACE.

THE sermons comprising this volume have all been preached in the ordinary course of my work in London. The book is published in the earnest hope that it may be useful in more ways than one. It should be welcome to those who are sincerely anxious to know how to get the ear of working people, and attract them to the house of God; whilst it may be useful to busy preachers, teachers, and workers. Large numbers of these have thanked me for my former volumes, and this has led me to think that perhaps this also may be welcomed by those who have been pleased to speak so kindly of my other labours.

Beside the sermons, I have added several outlines of addresses, which I delivered on Sunday afternoons to working people, some years ago, in Birmingham. I rejoice that since then the P. S. A. movement has become popular; and now numerous gatherings of working people are held on Sunday afternoons in many parts of the land. I thank God for all the workers in this field; may they be increased greatly.

In sending this volume forth, I do so in the hope that God will bless and use it in some way for His own glory.

CHARLES LEACH.

QUEEN'S PARK, LONDON, W., 1893.

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SERMONS AND ADDRESSES.

A New Year's Address.

JANUARY 6, 1889.

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore."—JOSH. iii. 4.

MOSES is dead. The man who made a tyrant king sit uneasily on his throne, while his crown shook upon his head, is gone home to his rest. The great leader who brought forth a nation of slaves from the house of their bondage to face a land of freedom, has laid down his staff, given his last command, and passed away.

The work he undertook is not finished. The people are still on the wrong side the river; they have not yet reached their home in the Promised Land; but he who hoped to take them there has dropped out of the ranks and is no more.

How frequently this happens. How seldom are men allowed to complete their work and put on the finishing touch. The artist falls before his unfinished canvas, and another hand completes the picture. The poet leaves his poem incomplete, and another tries to catch his muse and sing out the concluding refrains. The architect closes his eyes in the last long sleep ere the top-stone of his stately building is put on amid the shouts of the people. The statesman dies ere he can complete and carry his measure

which is to give hope and freedom to the people. The minister is silenced in death before he has concluded his last great sermon. We live in a world of broken purposes, unfinished work, and incompleted tasks.

Moses is gone, and his mantle falls upon another. Another hand is to take up the reins of government, wield the sword of the commander, and lead the people to the end of their march.

Joshua has taken the leader's place, assumed command, and has brought the people to the banks of the Jordan. There he encamps his men. By the side of that river he issues his instructions, which are to prepare the people to cross it. This Jordan is the line which divides them from the land to which they travel—the land which God has promised to be theirs. There it flows, that strange historic river, neither broad nor deep, yet running between them and complete freedom, between the old land and the new, like the river of death which divides God's people now from the land of heavenly rest.

But now they have reached the last night of their encampment in the old land. With the day dawn they will enter the new. To-morrow's sun will see them in a new district with the old behind them, and the command to them is to prepare themselves, for they "have not passed this way heretofore."

In some respects we resemble them. We have been travelling through another year. It is dying behind us, and a new one is all in front of us. To us the new year, as most new years, is a land of promise and of hope. Of the new year we may say, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." For ourselves and our future we may perhaps learn some lessons if we consider the *new start* this people were making, the *manner in which they were to make it*, and the *promise given them for it*.

I. NOTICE THE PEOPLE'S NEW START.

The forty years of wilderness life are over. The next stage will be Canaan. To-morrow they will place their feet in the land of promise, the land flowing with milk and honey, the land to which God did not permit their leader Moses to come. Two things may be noticed here :—

1. *The unknown.*

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore." They knew but little about it. It was all new and strange.

(Is not this true of us? We are passing into a new year, a new period of our history, a new slice of time cut out of the eternities. What do we know of it? It is an unknown, an unexplored country. A thick veil hides it from our view. All attempts to forecast it, and tell exactly what it shall bring to us all, will end in disappointment. Here all efforts fail. Man can recount and record the past. Digging up from the archives of the nations the dusty chronicles of the peoples who have been, he can let us see them much as they were; unearthing buried cities and piecing together broken columns and marbles, he can erect again for us the noble buildings of the past. ~~They~~ He can foretell the eclipses of the sun and the moon, and tell us when the stars will be seen. The keen, watchful, intelligent politician may be able to forecast the future a little. He may be able to see by the current of public life and opinion, by the wisdom or unwisdom of men in office, when the ministry will fall, and may predict with tolerable accuracy, sometimes, who will be next Prime Minister. But where is the man who can forecast what ^a ~~this~~ new year will bring to ^{us} ~~you~~? ~~Man can tell us of the rise and flow of the tide, but he is powerless to tell us what this new year will be to us; he is unable to say which of us will be here.~~ Given the whole number of us and our ages, such is the certainty of the law of averages, that it will be easy to say

how many of us will have shuffled off this mortal coil. But who shall it be? Naturally we should think the oldest. But, in the strange unknown providence of God, the most aged saint here may see the next new year begin, whilst the youngest may be gone to-morrow. It is the unexpected which often happens. It is an unknown country we enter. And he is the wise man who enters it in God's name and God's strength, assured that he works all things well.

“Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.”

2. *Notice some things which they knew.*

~~They knew~~^{u. of} there would be foes to face, hard work to be done, many battles to be fought, many enemies to be conquered. Jericho was yonder across the plains, not many miles away. It had to be taken. They were assured of much hard fighting.

(We too may be assured of that. In each personal experience all this will probably come. We must cross our Jordans, and overcome many a stronghold. The enemies of God and the soul meet us on every hand, and we are not more sure of death itself than we are of many a conflict, many a battle, many a struggle, and many a time of heart-searching and pain. It is through much tribulation we enter the kingdom. And this does not simply refer to the kingdom to come beyond the clouds and beyond the sea, but it is true of the kingdom that now is. The kingdoms of knowledge, of progress, of wealth, of goodness, of peace, of rest, of joy—all are entered through much tribulation. There is no primrose path to the land of promise. Life is not a review day, in full dress, marching past. There are forced marches, short rations, wet camps,

watchful nights, and the enemies' fire. Our journey through the years is not a grand progress in silver slippers over velvet lawns, in glorious sunshine, with the birds of paradise making even the air vocal with their music. It often lies down deep valleys, in fogs and mists, over moor and fen, across sharp rocks and up thorny paths, in which our feet, "all torn and bleeding, mark the way." Every prudent man who knows a little of life will expect it to be so. He will join the poet who sang out this idea in words such as the following:—

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fight to win the prize,
And sail through stormy seas?

Sure I must fight if I would reign ;—
Increase my courage, Lord.
I'll bear the cross, endure the toil,
Supported by Thy Word.

And if I am not mistaken, we may take it for granted, too, that in this new year, and the next few years, there will be many a conflict between the Church and the world, between capital and labour, and between rich and poor. We have seen signs of the rising tide. Labour is combining and gaining strength. The masses possess the vote. The outcome of ages of the teaching of the principles of Jesus Christ from countless pulpits, has been to spread ideas of human brotherhood and equality everywhere. These lessons, in other forms, and in less measured language, are now preached by the magazine and the cheap evening newspaper, in club-rooms and at street corners. Poverty is a thing which will have to be considered. Men will not much longer be contented with charity, and submit to mere authority. The causes of

poverty have been considered, and many will seek to have them removed. Days of glaring inequality and wrong will have to pass away. It is not in the nature of things that men will much longer endure the long and excessive toil with so small a share of its fruits. They are asking, Why should all the benefit, or the chief part of it, which results through the invention of machinery go to swell the great fortunes of the rich? Why should not the workman have a share of it?

These and many more such questions will have to be faced. We, as Christian men, must expect to take our share in the conflicts which will come. These questions will be decided and settled by the people and their representatives in the House of Commons. Let us see to it that we spare no effort to get the people sober and godly. Let us be quite sure that we do not leave the so-called masses in the hands of unprincipled adventurers, who care neither for God nor man, but only for the advancement of their own interests.

I think we may say certainly that soon in social and political life we shall enter new strange ground, of which it may be said, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore."

II. CONSIDER NOW THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY WERE TO MAKE THIS NEW START.

1. *They were to sanctify themselves.*

There was to be no uncleanness among them. As to their own persons and their relations to others, they were to purify themselves. It was not for them to enter upon this new enterprise with any unclean sin upon them. They were to be pure, so far as they knew how to be.

And could there be a more suggestive lesson for the men of to-day, for those of us who are here, than this? Yes, that was good indeed. "Sanctify yourselves."

Brethren, you are in a new slice of time ; you are on the threshold of the new year : I beseech you, sanctify yourselves. Men, let me take up the language of the Book and say, "Wash you, make you clean." The sin of the past clings to us. We look back upon years of bitterness and wrong. We have forgotten God and wandered into regions of sin. Even those who have been to the fountain opened for sin have need to come again and again. In days when we should have been bold and brave for God, we have been cowardly and selfish. In times when we should have denounced the wrong, we have been guilty of it ourselves, and thus practised a guilty silence. To us all to-day the words of the apostle may be spoken with singular appropriateness, "Put off the old man with his deeds ; and put on the new man." Forsake the paths of sin, and selfishness, and shame, and coldness. Get once more to the cleansing fountain ; come again to the blood of atonement ; lie low for a while in the shadow of the Cross, and get again that blessedness and joy which you experienced when you first knew the Lord. "Sanctify yourselves." May the glory of the Christian redemption be more and more to us. May we all enter this year with clean hands, pure hearts, and lowly souls.

2. *They were to enter promptly at the given moment.*

The moment they saw the ark of the covenant, and the priests bearing it, in that moment they were to arise and follow. There was to be no putting off—no waiting—no delay.

This, the sin of delay, has been the curse of many. Who does not remember those whom it has ruined ? Many a glorious opportunity, many a golden chance, many a favourable moment, has been allowed to slip by, unimproved, unseized, and unblest. Both in things of time and things of eternity there are multitudes who never will be prompt.

The weather gives a good chance to the farmer, and some are not ready for it. The markets are in a favourable condition, and the merchant does not seize it. The tide and wind are suitable for the vessel to put out to sea, and the captain is behind. Delay, indifference, unpunctuality were not to mark this people. Would that they did not so often mark us!

I have said and thought that delay is almost a disease with some. They will be late down in the morning for breakfast; they anger and annoy the cook by having dinner cold and spoiled before they can come to it. If they go for a train they are almost sure either to have to jump into it as it moves, or find the station door locked. It almost seems as if they were born ten or twenty minutes behind time, and have never been able to catch up.

But sad and serious as this may sometimes be in ordinary matters, it becomes serious and grave when it enters into matters of religion and affects a man's relations to his God. And here perhaps it is most prevalent. Multitudes upon multitudes have been impressed with the truth, and felt moved to seek peace with God, but, like Felix, they have said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." My good friends, do not let that be your language now. It has been far too long. Sanctify yourselves. Pass into this new year cleansed by the blood of your loving Saviour.

3. *They were to march with reverence.*

No irreverence, no lightness, no frivolous crowding. Between them and the ark there was to be a respectful distance. They were to pass in orderly reverent procession.

I do not know that I need complain of any particular person here. It is not my object to rebuke any individual within the range of my voice. So far as I know, it is your custom to manifest a reverent spirit. But I may, for all

that, describe this as an irreverent age. There is a reckless disregard of sacred things and an irreverence abroad which would have shocked our fathers, and which is almost enough to make their bones turn in their graves. There are men who laugh at religion, make jokes about the Bible, and who would not hesitate to turn the most sacred things into burlesque. Brethren, be ye not of this class. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate."

There is something awfully solemn in the rapidity with which our years slip away. And as they go, one by one, we are pushed nearer and nearer to the stern realities of the other world. We are approaching with rapid and certain steps the great temple of the future, where reside the mysteries of God, and where we are to live out our destiny, determined by the spirit in which we approach whilst here. Let others fritter away their years in folly and irreverence if they will, but be ye sober, be ye watchful, be ye holy.

III. IN THIS NEW START THE LORD WAS WITH THEM.

In this they were fortunate. It was by God's command they moved forward and entered the new path. He was with them and secured their prosperity.

Take God with you into the new year, and all will be well. Remember that the year is divinely controlled, and that He who sits in the heavens will be your Companion and Guide, and all will be well. I would enforce this upon the notice of all, but especially upon our younger friends. I say God will be with you, and be your friend and helper, *if you will let Him*. But it is awfully possible to keep God out of our lives. We may shut the door in His face and bid Him be gone. When Jesus Christ was here among men, there were some foolish enough to bid Him leave them. They did not want Him. His presence was dis-

tasteful to them—a restraint upon their wicked conduct—and they urged Him to go. He took them at their word and departed. What their future was it is not for me to say. But I could easily tell what yours will be if you live without God.

I dare say you have often heard it said that the future is divinely controlled. No doubt it is. God sits at the centre of the universe. All the threads are in His hand. But it is also true that you and I make our future. What we are to become depends on what we are. The house we shall occupy in the future must have its foundations laid now. If we want a good house we must lay good foundations. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” *That*, and not something else. The farmer who sowed tares and expected to reap wheat would be styled a lunatic, and be taken off to Bedlam, or deserve to be. He who is a spendthrift and expects to save a fortune is mad. He who expects to find his way home and never walks that way is a fool.

And yet many are guilty of folly worse than all this. They live without God, care but little for the soul’s eternal interests, and yet somehow expect that at last all will be well. Could there be worse or more mischievous conduct?

My friends, let us all be wise. Here we stand on the threshold of the year. Like this ancient people we are a mixed company. Among us there are old men and little children, strong men and sick men. But forward we all are going. Let us go forward cleansed from our sin, filled with the Holy Ghost, determined to make this year the best of all our years in our faith, our holiness, our obedience, and our love.

Church Building.

“And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all His service, and for the holy garments.”—EXOD. xxxv. 21.

MAN is called a religious animal. He will worship something. The feeling of reverence for some being men call God seems to be universal. Go where you will it is the same. North, south, east, or west, in cold countries or hot countries, among civilised beings or uncivilised, man seeks some object of devotion. Men have been found without towns, without houses, without books, without churches, but seldom, if ever, without gods.

For the most part, where there is the least approach to civilisation, men erect tents, temples, or churches, in which to treasure their holy things, place their idols, or join in acts of worship. The people of whom the text speaks were commanded to erect a tabernacle for their God. They are but just delivered from a land in which they had lived and served as serfs. They have taken but one step toward nationality as yet. Only the other day they were slaves in the most bitter bondage. And now, as soon as the fetters are struck off and they are free, they are commanded to erect a house for God.

Whatever may be true of other peoples, this people must begin their national life by acts of worship. The foundation of their freedom—of their life—is to be God. They are to begin where some only end. Surely this is wise. Man

makes progress in all things good in proportion as he grows in the knowledge and reverence of God. We rejoice to see them make this wise start. God first. When Noah came out of the ark to the desolation of a ruined world, he seems to have erected first of all an altar to God. When the Pilgrim Fathers, driven from their own land which they so much loved, landed on the other side of the Atlantic, they knelt in prayer and devotion and thanks to God. They laid the foundations of the great republic on their knees at the Plymouth Rock.

This people were commanded to build a house for God, where He could dwell, in which He could manifest His glory, in which His power might be felt. In order to secure the house the people are asked to bring their offerings and make their contributions. The response which they made was a right loyal and generous one, and such as made all hearts glad.

My good friends, as you are aware, we have a house to erect for God. This "iron tabernacle" in which we now assemble must soon give place to a more durable structure, which we hope to erect to the glory of our God. It has seemed good to us at this time to try and stir each other up and make an appeal for offerings toward the work. If any ask how and in what spirit he should give, we would refer him to this splendid example in the word of God. But, in order that we may better understand, let us see how they proceeded. A consideration of their case may let light in upon ours. We will notice that their gifts were acts of worship; their gifts were willing offerings; their gifts came from both rich and poor; and their gifts were exceedingly generous.

I. THEIR GIFTS WERE ACTS OF WORSHIP.

It was "the Lord's offering." Every bit of gold which

the rich man brought was a religious offering. Every bit of silver, every bit of brass was given with loving joy to God. They had not learned to distinguish, as have we, so sharply between the sacred and the secular. And it were well for us did we lessen the distinction between these two. Confusion, mischief, and wrong have sometimes arisen in consequence. What do we mean by sacred and secular? When we speak of the sacred, some mean that which is considered as religious, and having some connection with acts of devotion and God. Whilst the secular is supposed to be outside of and apart from God. This division has been pushed to such an extent that certain classes of men who profess to be Atheists call themselves "Secularists." I have a deepening conviction that much of what people call secular is, or ought to be, very sacred. To teach children in a Sunday-school is called religious work, whilst teaching them in a day-school is called secular instruction. Is this right? Is it wise? Is it true? The day-school teacher, to say the least, is quite as well trained and often as devoted as those in the Sunday-school. Is it not as religious a work to develop the faculties of the children and help to make them capable of honouring God as it is to tell them of God?

Preaching this sermon is called a sacred occupation. Making a speech in Parliament is called secular. But when John Bright raised his voice in Parliament in favour of cheap bread for the people, and against wicked and destructive war, was not his occupation as sacred as mine? We have drawn our distinctions too sharply; and the sooner we learn to make *all* we do a sacred work, the better it will be for us.

Their offerings were acts of devotion. I want ours to be the same. To erect a house for God is as much a religious act as to worship Him in it. To contribute of your money toward its cost is as much a religious privilege as to

contribute to its support and maintenance when erected is a religious duty. Every cheque, every bank-note, every sovereign, every shilling contributed in a sincere desire to glorify God is as acceptable to Him as the prayers we make to Him.

There is a sense, and that a true one, in which our gifts are the measure of our love, our loyalty, our devotion. One day our Saviour stood near the offering-box as the people cast in their gifts. There were rich men who gave their large sums, but these did not draw forth the commendation of our Lord. Among those who came up to that treasury chest was one who had seen some sorrow, passed through some chastening, and endured the pinch of poverty. Hers was not, and could not be, a large gift, as men estimate things. She was a widow, reduced to her last coin. But recognising her duty to her God, she came and put in that last mite. Though it was small, in God's sight it was a large figure. She gave more than all the rest. They gave of their abundance, she gave her all. And her gift was the measure of her devotion, and won the commendation of the Saviour.

Who has not read of the woman with her alabaster box of precious ointment? With a love that stopped not at cost, she brought it to pour it upon the person of her Saviour, as a small expression of her devotion and love.

We have the highest expression of this principle which the world has seen on the part of God Himself. Our Saviour is trying to express the love of God in such a way as will enable men to understand it. And He shows us how we can measure it by His gift. It was impossible to state it any other way so effectively; hence He says, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Judged by this high standard, weighed in these balances, it is to be feared that multitudes of men, who would be greatly offended if I said they were not Christians, will be found greatly wanting. Men will give five hundred pounds for a picture who never perhaps gave as many shillings, at one time, to the Church of God, to religious missions—either home or foreign—or to the cause of God's poor. No clothing, no ornaments, no furniture, no houses, no pleasures, are too costly for some of God's children, who allow their churches to be crippled with debts, which it would be but little effort for them to make free. Not a few of the Lord's people live in luxurious ease, and heap up colossal fortunes, most of which they might well use for the promotion of God's glory.

I have heard of men whose business has fallen off a little in times of depression, and who have found it necessary to curtail and cut down expenses. Where did they begin? At God's cause. The subscriptions to the Church, to missions, to philanthropy, have either been stopped entirely, or greatly reduced. They continued to smoke expensive cigars, drink costly wines, ride beautiful carriages behind high-stepping horses, and indulged their expensive tastes as before.

Of all these I have one thing to say. I dare not suggest that they had no love for God. But, measured by their gifts, they had only a slender affection for Him and His cause.

I once called upon a man in Birmingham who was said to be a rich merchant. I went to ask him to contribute to the purchase of a chapel for Congregational worshippers. He promised to help, but then told a sorrowful tale of depression in business, and of the great struggles he was passing through. "But," said he with a tear of gratitude in his eye, and many more of them in his voice, "I am devoutly thankful that, so far, I have not had to curtail

my gifts to God by one single shilling, and am hoping I may not have to do."

In passing from this part of my subject, I only desire to say to you, that I believe many of you have a deep and sincere love for God and His holy work. Let your gifts to the new house for God be the expression and measure of your devotion and piety, and we shall have a generous response.

II. THEIR GIFTS WERE WILLING OFFERINGS.

It is interesting to read the account of their conduct. So far as I can see, there was no coercion at this time to force these gifts. No tax was laid upon them which they might not escape. Compulsion was not introduced into the matter at all. Whatever took place afterwards as to tithes for the support of God's house when up, there seems to have been none now at the erection. We do not read of the imposition of Church rates, and the imprisonment of those who refused to pay. A spirit of loyal love possessed the people, and with willing hearts they gave their goods and their money.

The Tabernacle was needed as the visible home of God, in which He might place His glory in the shechinah light, and before which they might assemble for their intercourse with Him and with each other in their worship. So Moses had a gathering of the people and addressed them. He pointed out what was wanted, and bade those who were willing to assist. When he had finished his address, the people took the matter to heart, and soon began to make their offerings. The men brought their bits of gold, and bits of silver, and bits of cloth and other material; and the women, who have never been behind the men in their devotion to religious work of all kinds, took part in this good work. Stripping off their ornaments, earrings,

bracelets, rings, and other valuable personal decorations, they cast them into the common treasury. Noted for her love of jewellery, the Hebrew woman had a deeper love for God and His house, and so made personal sacrifice. Then, too, her busy fingers were active upon various cloths and embroideries which were used in the work. With willing hearts they made their offerings to God. There does not seem to have been any murmuring and complaining that the Church was always begging, and so much was required. They poured their gifts out with loving willing hearts.

8. To-day I am here to ask your gifts for the erection of God's house. This iron tabernacle must be replaced by a large and permanent house for the glory of God. It is for God we are to build; it is to God we are to give. We are to erect a house in which we and our children, and our children's children may come together to meet Him. Here, on this site, we are to put up a church in which God shall dwell, and in which men shall meet Him. You are asked to contribute towards the erection of a tabernacle in which men shall praise God for His mercy, in which the wearied shall find rest, the tempted find succour, the sinner meet his Saviour, and the saint his Lord.

May the same spirit which stirred up this ancient people take possession of all of us, and give us willing hearts to make our offerings with joy and gladness. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

I know it is not much some of you can give. Yours is not the most luxurious lot in life. Though you are the children of a king, your palace is on the other side of the flood, and your riches are not largely those of this life; still you will, I know, do what you can, and I have the assurance that whatever you contribute will be your willing, loyal, loving offering. This church, this ministry, this worship,

are all of your own choice, supported by your own gifts. You are all here because you love to be here. You have found God as your Saviour. You have here found others who share with you the glories of the Christian redemption, and with them you will gladly share the honour of church building. The men will bring their gold and silver, and the women will not be behind. I am not afraid of failure. With such a loving people and with such a good and loving God, failure is impossible.

There will be some who can give no money, no goods, and but little time to labour. Theirs is a hard lot. Toil, long and laborious, is their portion. But all such as these can help, and we want them to be willing sharers of our work. They can pray for us. They can knock at heaven's door. They can tell our Father all about our need ; and we know that the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

If we are not mistaken, both rich and poor were sharers in this grand and happy work of building the Tabernacle. Each according to his ability did what he could. Our confidence is that it will be so here in our work. We shall have the rich man's gold and the poor man's pence. We shall have the work of the men and the labour of the women, and we want the willing loving prayers of all to be upon the work of each.

III. THEIR GIFTS WERE GENEROUS.

But seldom has the Church of God, in any age, seen greater generosity than on this occasion. They did not bring to the Lord's treasury things which to them were of little value. Their gifts were costly, beautiful, and precious. Nothing is said in the narrative about many calls made upon them as an excuse for giving small sums. They do not seem to have considered how little and how poor they

could make their offerings, but how great and how generous. There was no hunting for threepenny bits to give instead of shillings. No giving of shillings instead of sovereigns. They were not up to those mean tricks in those days. It is only in these modern times that we find this reduced to a custom. Some time ago I went to worship with a man whose income is over *eight thousand pounds a year*. He is not married, and therefore has not the expense of a family. Before we started for the service he discovered that there would be a collection, and he went about seeking to get change for half-a-crown, as that was the smallest coin he had !

These people generously gave their best. That is what God wants of each of us. And I believe that is just what will be done here.

Our needs are great. We shall require *six or seven thousand pounds*. For us it is a large sum, but not larger than we shall get. If the same reverent, willing, generous spirit mark us which characterised them, we shall have all we need. If you read this account, you will find that so large were their offerings that Moses had to stop them from making further offerings. Just think of that for one moment. So much given that the leader had to cry, Hold, enough ! Has there ever been such a case since then ?

Before I close this address, I desire to make one other appeal to you. Hitherto it would almost seem that all my address has been to stir you up to generous gifts for the work of the Lord's house. I do not desire to have it so. I want you to give your offerings ; but God wants you to give yourselves, your bodies, your souls, your spirits, your children—all you have and are—to Himself. He wants us all. The old men, full of years and experience ; the young men, full of energy and hope ; the rich man, the poor man, the scholarly man, and the unlettered man. And in closing, I

use the words of Paul, addressed to the Roman Christians, and placed at the beginning of the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans : " I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Dreams and Dreamers.

"I have dreamed a dream."—DAN. ii. 3.

DREAMS have played an important part in the history of the world. God seems to have made large use of the visions of the night and of dreams to call men into His service, to commission them to do His will, execute His judgments, and to reveal His gracious purposes concerning the world. It was in a vision that God revealed to the patriarch Abraham that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for number, and that his posterity should be carried away captive to a strange land, and then inherit the land of Canaan, and be the Lord's chosen people. It was a dream of the night which led to Joseph, the innocent prisoner of old, being called out of his dungeon to the palace. The king's dream, in the providence of God, became the means of that Hebrew youth stepping out of the gaol to be prime minister in the greatest nation of the then known world. It was a dream which revealed to Jacob, as he lay with a stone for a pillow, the great facts that earth and heaven are one, that the angels of God are ministering servants from the world above to this world below. It was in a vision that Isaiah had such clear conceptions of God's holiness, of man's sinfulness, and of his mission to declare God's will.

The Old Testament is full of revelations, which came through dreams and visions of the night, and the subject is well worthy of examination.

Nor is the New Testament without them. After our Lord Jesus Christ came and revealed God, life, immortality, salvation, and peace, the use of vision and dream did not cease.

When our Saviour was born in Bethlehem Herod was on the throne at Jerusalem. The rumours of a new-born king made the wicked Herod tremble for his own safety. When he failed to find the infant Christ he slew all the children at Bethlehem. It was in a dream that Joseph was warned to flee into Egypt, and thus secure the safety of Christ. When the time had come that the Gospel of the grace of God should be preached to the Gentiles, God revealed His will in the matter to Peter in a vision on the house-top at Jaffa. That vision struck at the prejudice and narrowness of the Jews, and proclaimed to the men of all time, that God is no respecter of persons. And some years later, when Paul was planting churches of Christ among the heathen, it was revealed to him that he should cross over from Asia to Europe. In a vision of the night there stood a man of Macedonia, and said, "Come over and help us." And the Book of Revelation is full of great and important visions. Like the Book of Ezekiel in the Old Testament, the revelation in the New makes use of visions to let us see some of the deep things of God. And down the avenues of time God has spoken to men in dreams and visions.

But among all the dreams and visions of which we have read, there are but few more remarkable and important than this, which filled the slumbers of Nebuchadnezzar, and slipped from his memory afterwards. He saw a great image shining with brightness, with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, thighs of brass, legs of iron, feet part of iron and part of clay. But he could not recall this dream. Nor were any of his wise men able to help him.

But the whole dream and its interpretation were revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night; and he was able not only to tell the king his dream, but to expound to him fully the meaning of the symbolic figure which rose up before him in his night visions.

There are several things which we may here notice, we trust, with a measure of interest and profit.

I. FIRST, WE WILL CONSIDER THE DREAMER.

The dreamer of the text was an Eastern monarch. He has long since gone to his account, but it may be interesting to look at him. There he is in secure possession of his throne. Famed as a skilful soldier and victor, he is the mightiest monarch on the face of the earth. Babylon, the seat of his empire, the place of his throne, is among the most imposing and great of the ancient cities of the world. Like the modern Babylon we call London, this ancient one was great almost beyond conception. The city lay four square, fifteen miles on each of its sides. Encircled by massive walls as high as the dome of St. Paul's, it was a stronghold capable of resisting the skill and force of almost any enemy. These massive walls were, it is said, half as broad again as London Bridge. They were surmounted by strong and numerous towers, into which large numbers of soldiers could be flung to hurl their missiles and shower their arrows upon any invading force. Within the walls of the city all was equally great and grand. Yonder stands the ancient Tower of Babel, now the temple of one of their famous idol gods. And here, on this side the River Euphrates, which runs through the city, stands the palace of the king, with the magnificent Hanging Gardens, piled up tier above tier. The palace is a picture without and within. Its white marble pillars, its large and lofty appearance, make it imposing. Within

there are lofty halls, polished floors, many-coloured mosaics, and all that can charm the eye. "The columns rise festooned and wreathed, the wealth of empires flashing from the grooves, the ceilings adorned with images of bird and beast, and scenes of prowess and conquest. The walls are hung with shields, and emblazoned until it seems that the whole round of splendour is exhausted. Each arch is a mighty leap of architectural achievement—golden stars, shining down on glowing arabesque; hangings of embroidered work, on which mingle the blueness of the sky, the greenness of the grass, and the whiteness of the sea foam; tapestries hung on silver rings, wedding together the pillars of marble; floors of stained marble, sunset red and midnight black, and inlaid with gleaming pearl."

This is the imagined home of this royal dreamer. See him in the midst of it. Seated on his throne, around him stand his chief men of state, his eunuchs, priests, princes, and captains, all in their many-coloured and glittering garbs. He is troubled. What has gone wrong? Has some part of his kingdom broken out into rebellion? Has the death-plague seized upon his friends and chief counsellors? Nay, he has had a dream, a simple dream. But it has slipped from his recollection, and he wishes to have it recalled and interpreted. It has made a deep impression upon him, even though he cannot tell it forth as yet. We have the dream, and we know the interpretation. We are always glad this man had this dream.

The world owes a great deal to its dreamers. Some have blessed the world by the great victories which they won. Taking their place at the head of great armies, they have led them on to destroy the oppressor and bring liberty and freedom to the nations. These have been suitably recognised, and their achievements duly rewarded. But the dreamers have done noblest service, and have often been despised,

neglected, and overlooked. What a great and noble company the dreamers make. John Bunyan dreamed the "Pilgrim's Progress," a book which, next to the Bible, which it illustrates, has had a larger circulation than any other book in the world. That was a grand dream, and the world owes much to it. The dreamer lay in a dungeon by night, and with his blind child at his side, made laces by day, which his wife sold to get bread. Martin Luther was a dreamer. He saw a reformed religion, a pure Gospel, and a curtailing of the power of the Pope. The world is his debtor. Columbus was a dreamer. He had visions of another and a great land across an unexplored and unknown ocean. Abraham Lincoln was a dreamer. He had a vision of an emancipated people, of coloured men as free as the white men. Sir Robert Peel was a dreamer. He saw visions of cheap bread for a slaving peasantry, and got it, though it cost abuse and scorn. Sir Christopher Wren was a dreamer. He had a vision of St. Pauls, and it grew up in the city of London.

The dreamer, the visionary, the thinker, is the man that blesses the world. Isaiah had a vision of Jesus Christ in which he saw Him crucified, slain like a dumb sheep for the sins of many. He saw the peoples flocking to Christ like doves to their windows. That vision of his has been a joy to thousands. What countless thousands have read it, and then have turned to the real, living, loving Christ that Isaiah saw in vision afar off. And if I speak of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men, the King of men, the Prince who shall have dominion over men, will you call me a dreamer? So be it. I will be content to stand as one of the last, and one of the least of the great and noble company of dreamers. And I will comfort my heart and spirit by meditating upon the words of my Saviour Himself, who said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

II. LET US NOW NOTICE THE DREAM.

The dreamer was a mighty monarch. The dream was worthy of the dreamer. However great the dreamer, the dream was not less so. He went to rest that night with his mind full of great and important thoughts. He thought of what wars had been, and wondered what wars would be. He knew himself secure on his throne then. But did he think that soon he would be gone? Gone where? He lived in the present, knew the present, had conquered the present—but what of the future? And so he slept and dreamed. He wondered “what should come to pass hereafter.” It was a great dream. No idolater ever had a greater dream, and but few men any so great. He went out far beyond himself. The present did not satisfy him. He wanted to pull back the curtain and see what was beyond. And God gave him remarkable knowledge and revelation through His servant Daniel.

Have we not all had dreams like this? Think you that this king was the only man who ever felt dissatisfied with the present? Have not we all tried to look beyond? Like a caged bird, my soul has struck its wings against the bars of the present and longed to be at liberty to soar. Overleaping the bounds of time and space, most of us have had visions and dreams.

I have had a vision of God; it may have been a dream, but I have thought about Him. I have looked around me in the world, and have seen traces of Him. The great mountains and the mighty ocean, which I have seen in the majesty of its fury, have said something to me of the greatness of God. The harmony, the unity, the design, the contrivance I see all around me, have made me believe that the great First Cause is an intelligent designer. But I have dreamt more than this, but somehow it has gone from me. I seem to have had visions of love, and mercy, and

pity, but I can't quite find out myself, I want some one to interpret. I can't myself quite solve it all. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" asks one in ancient days who also had dreams about God.

Then I have had dreams of the soul and its destiny. Dissatisfied with a few fleeting years of the present, I feel somehow that there is a soul within me which must survive the body. I have dreamed of "what shall come to pass hereafter."

Then I have had visions and dreams of a future in which justice and righteousness shall prevail, in which the glaring iniquities and wrongs of this present life shall all be set right. Have we not all had visions of a rest, and a peace, and joy which do not often or long remain with and bless us now? In the midst of the great anxieties, turmoil, and unrest of this present life, we have dreamed that there must be something better hereafter.

But have we not had dreams of another sort? Sometimes we have felt, and felt with sorrow and shame, our own weakness and badness. We have become conscious that we were out of harmony with things around us. There is a something within us which speaks to us. Call it conscience or anything else—there it is. Like a policeman, it has laid hands upon us when we have done wrong. An old and beautiful fable tells of a marvellous ring which in ancient days used to be worn on the finger of a man. Whenever the wearer transgressed, it pinched the flesh of the finger, and by the smart it made, reminded him that he did wrong. We wear no such ring, but the smart is ours within when we fall into sin. We do not carry it on a finger, but in a more permanent place. Like Nathan to David, it often says, "Thou art the man." I have dreamed of forgiveness, how to get it, and where. "Who can tell me? Who can interpret for me all these dreams

of mine? Is there any Daniel whom I can call into court who shall reveal to me all these secrets? We shall see.

III. NOTICE THE INTERPRETATION OF THIS DREAM.

Daniel was able to tell the king his dream, and also to expound it. And what an exposition it was! As we read it we are moved. We stand amid the clash of arms, the rise of empires, and their fall. Kingdom succeeds kingdom, monarch follows monarch. The Babylonian head of gold, the Persian breast of silver, the Grecian thighs of brass, and the Roman legs of iron, all come and go as Daniel expounds the dream.

We will not attempt to trace the progress and fulfilment of Daniel's words through all the rise and fall of empires. Others better able than we have done that. Nor will we attempt all the details which some have done in their close and careful study of this account. There are two things we must note in this interpretation.

First, the Christ kingdom symbolised by the stone cut from the mountain without hands.

About this kingdom it is to be noticed that it shall destroy all others and shall never end. It is to be victorious and to be permanent. All others have their day and die. All others come, live a while, and are no more. But the kingdom of Jesus Christ is to endure for ever. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away," were the words spoken by our Lord Himself. And the words are at once a statement of His eternal endurance, a prediction concerning the destruction of the world, and of the permanence of His word and authority.

It may seem now that this prediction of the universal conquest of Christ is far off. But come it must. Nothing can stop the progress of His kingdom in the earth. Great

triumphs have been won. Peoples have come to His Cross who before were in darkness. Nations have left their gods, and come to His feet. And I have no fear of ultimate victory. I have seen the sun rise in the early morning. The hill-tops have caught his light and beauty. But far down in the valley the mists and fogs have still hung thick. But the rising orb of day has gone triumphantly on, sent his light down into the valleys, until every dark place has received his light, and the shadows have all fled away. And so shall it be with Jesus Christ. He has arisen with light to bless the dark world. Already many have felt the warmth of His love. Already millions have passed into His heavenly kingdom and praise Him day and night. And millions more are in His kingdom on the earth. And the peoples shall come as "doves to their windows." I do not quite know how, but I have no doubt about Jesus ultimately winning the hearts of all. Nations shall be born in a day. He can give Pentecostal showers which move the multitudes. The Word has gone forth. It cannot lie. Jesus shall yet be King and rule all men. "He is the Prince of the kings of the earth."

The second thing I wish to note is that this Christ prefigured by the mountain stone is the interpreter of all my dreams of God, the soul, and a future state.

In His school I get my answer. I have been to other schools and could not learn. I have tried other teachers, and they were unable to help me. Nebuchadnezzar summoned all his wise men. They were accustomed to interpret dreams—it was their business—but they were perplexed now. It was but seldom they had such a task. And just as they were all silent, so all systems to which I apply are dumb when I ask about God, about peace, about the soul, and my destiny. But when I come to Christ He interprets my dream. He not only reveals God to me, but

He tells me of His love and kindness. God is love. God is a Father. God cares for me. Jesus Christ tells me how I can be at peace with God through Himself. He tells me about things which are to come to pass. He draws aside the curtain, and lets me look in the future as no one else has or can. He tells me that my dream of a future life is true. He assures me of this, that I may not fear dying like a dog and being no more seen.

Jesus Christ is God's answer to all my questions, and visions, and dreams. And He is your answer too. He is the answer to all men, irrespective of class or social standing. Our longing for God and life are met in Him. "He that hath the Son hath life." May we all have this life in its fulness and blessedness, and know in whom we have believed.

Shams and Frauds.

“Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.”—JUDG. xii. 1.

THERE has been a war in the land. The children of Ammon, a wild, wandering, warlike, brutal people, taking delight in putting out the eyes of their enemies, and practising other barbarities, had attacked one of the borders of Israel. The elders of Gilead summoned a man to be their leader named Jephthah, who at the time of the outbreak of the war was at the head of a company of men we should call freebooters, living on mountaineering, brigandage, and plunder. The history of this brave heroic man, put into a sentence or two, is simply this. He was one of a family of several sons. But as he had the misfortune to be son of a mother who was not mother to the rest, and who was not married to his father, he was expelled and driven out. He went to a place called Tob, and made himself so famous by his exploits, that when Ammon began the war against Gilead, the responsible officers at once thought of Jephthah as the only suitable man to lead them on to battle and victory. They approached him. He reminded them, however, of their conduct towards him, of their hatred towards him, of their expulsion of him from among them. Then he taunted them a little about coming to him in their distress. But on their promise that if he led them now to victory, he should continue to be their head, he undertook the command.

It was not long ere the hosts of Ammon were scattered. He drove them out of twenty cities, and completely subdued them. It would seem that this remarkable leader appealed to some of the tribes to help him in the conflict; few only responded. These children of Ammon, the descendants of Lot by his younger daughter, like the Moabites, the descendants of Lot by his elder daughter, were known to be savage and strong. The response which Jephthah got from the tribes was not general. And yet when he returned from the war covered with victory, the Ephraimites met him in anger because they had not been allowed to share with him the victory. In their rage they said, "We will burn thy house with fire."

Men sometimes tell us the Bible is not true. But I venture to say that this is true to life and experience. For though these Ephraimites are long since dead and gone, and this tribe lost, there are many Ephraimites alive. They are men who will not share the conflict themselves, but are angry when others succeed. They are too cowardly to go and fight Goliath and remove the reproach from their country, but they will snarl in bitterness when David is willing to go. It will be a blessing to the world when it is rid of the last of these men. If ever you hear of his death let me know, and I will gladly conduct his funeral service, and will sing, "Rejoice for a brother deceased."

I. THERE ARE PEOPLE STILL WHO THINK NOTHING CAN BE DONE WITHOUT THEM.

These Ephraimites were by no means the only people who have exclaimed in assumed indignation, "Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee?" How dare you ever think of such a thing as to go without us? Preposterous! Don't you know who we are? Nothing can

be done without us! When we are not there, nobody should go. When we leave the world, woe betide you all. Wisdom is ours, and will die with us. I have only one thing to say to such men, and it is: The sooner you go, the better for us. We are quite willing to risk all, if only you will get out of the way. As long as you stop you are only dogs in the manger. We want you gone; so cut your sticks, make your wills, leave your church a legacy, and get off to heaven as soon as ever the Lord will have you, and we will try to get on without you.

We find these people everywhere—not a few of them at home. Ask that busy bustling housewife to take her children out into the country for a day; or ask her to attend church on a Sunday morning; or ask her to give a few hours to visiting among the sick and the poor and the sorrowful, what will she say? “How can I leave my house? Who will attend to my affairs? Bless you, the place could not go on without me. If I were out of that house a few days it would all go to ruin.” And thus they go on in their delusion. That woman has grown daughters who could and would gladly see to things if she would only let them. But she goes on in her foolish whim that nothing can be done without her. And I verily believe that not a few would rather have nothing done at all if they could not do it.

In business, too, the same thing occurs. There are men who are slaves to their business. Neither their sons nor their confidential men, who would suffer any loss rather than neglect the governor’s interest, can be trusted. They must see to it, or it won’t be done. I know a man who is the manager of a great concern, which has sunk two million pounds. It is a great business of its kind, and consists chiefly of house property. I had a conversation with the man one day in his office. He told me that he has the

whole business under his own supervision. Said he, "Not a nail in the concern but I know of." You will not be surprised when I tell you that, though he is by no means an old man, he has a grey head.

"Leave the office! Leave the shop! What nonsense. How could things go on without me?" You know the story of the little girl who one day told her mother that her father would not go to heaven. When the mother asked the reason why, the little one said, "Because he hasn't time to leave the store."

Some day God puts such a man on his back. He is away six months with a serious illness. His sons, who have not been thought capable hitherto, have responsibility thrown upon them, and rise to the position. The man is humbled, shamed, or it may be, delighted to find that the business has done better with the infusion of the new blood than it did with the old.

The Church of Christ, unfortunately, is afflicted with a large number of men who think nothing can be done without them. The minister dare not change services with a neighbouring minister lest the church should collapse without him. There is that officious elder or deacon who swells himself out with importance, and wonders what will become of the church when he is gone. He is the factotum. If any other member dares to propose to do anything without him, there is a dust. Nothing is right; nothing can succeed without him. And anything attempted which he does not originate must be put down. I have sometimes thought that some people would rather that sinners were not saved, than be saved in ways other than these people want. There are men who would rather the battle should be lost than others win it—who would almost wish that evil should remain rather than others have the honour of removing it.

But what does it matter who gains the victory if it be gained? If a common enemy oppose, let us rejoice that any one can subdue him. If sinners are saved, and God's name glorified, what does it matter which tribe of the hosts of Israel has the honour of defeating the foe? Do not let us be guilty of the unspeakable folly of the men of the text. Never let any of us suppose that any man—that any company of men—can ever be absolutely essential to the welfare of the world. God can accomplish His purposes without any of us. Look over the pages of history, and you will find that workers fall, but the work goes on.

The ancient Israelites might have said, "Whatever shall we do when Moses is dead?" Moses died. God had Joshua ready. What will happen when Elijah the prophet is taken home? Elisha receives his mantle, and takes his master's place. When the Lord Jesus was crucified, the bad men of the day who hated Him thought they had settled the matter, and in order to make sure they sealed the stone at His tomb, and set a guard. But He came forth. The work went on. When men killed the apostles, God raised up many more workers. And when we are all gone, God will live, His work will continue. It is folly to think that nothing can be done without us.

II. THERE ARE SOME WHO, THOUGH THEY CAN'T STOP THE WORK, TRY TO PREJUDICE THE WORKERS.

The men of the text said in effect, "And who are you? You are fugitives, mongrels, not of pure blood. What business have the likes of you to think you can fight the foes of Israel? It is monstrous, and we won't have it."

This, too, is far too common. Let a man be active, and do good work for God and the world or the Church, and ere long the Ephraimites will be at their disreputable work. Who is he? Where did he come from? Who

was his father? What about his family? Is not he of obscure origin and lowly birth? What nonsense for a fellow like him to attempt to do anything.

It seems always to have been so, at any rate since history began to be recorded. When Israel was in shame and danger from the Philistines, when no one could be found in all her coasts to accept the challenge of Goliath and attempt to remove the reproach from the land, from the king down there was no man in all the army bold enough, brave enough to run the risk. At length there came a youth from Bethlehem to bring food to his elder brothers, who were soldiers in Saul's army. He saw the soldiers of his country run away before the champion from the enemy's camp, his brothers among them. His young blood was stirred, and his patriotism fired. I will go and fight him. I will accept his challenge. Let me have a turn with him. His brother Eliab, who had heard this challenge for six weeks, and was as fearful as the rest, grew angry when his youthful brother determined to go out and fight. And when he saw that David was in earnest, he tried to lower him and prejudice him in the eyes of others. "With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" What an absurd idea for thee, a shepherd lad, a stripling, a boy, to talk in this way. Don't take any notice of him; he is proud and haughty, but he is only a shepherd.

The same thing goes on to-day. There are men who seem to think they have said something clever and settling when they say that the popular useful man was not born in a palace. "Who's he?" is their cry. "Why, don't you know that he was a collier, and worked in a coal-pit? His father died in a cottage. His mother was the daughter of a man who drove a horse and cart, and never had five pounds in his life."

And what of that? Is it not honest to get coal? Better be a collier and dig coal in the service of man, and thus the service of God, than be a loafer, an idler, a consumer, a drone, a drag upon society, even if men call you my Lord Tom Noddy. If a man does good honest work, what does it matter what his father was, or how poor? It does not concern us to know that his mother worked in a factory, except to give him all the more honour that with such a lowly start the man has done so well. It is folly to attempt to stop the work, or bring prejudice against the work, as did these Ephraimites.

Some of the noblest of God's servants have come from among the poor, and the obscure, and the unknown. Some of those who have done most for the elevation of the people, for the good of their fellows, and the glory of God, have been of lowly birth and humble origin.

Moses, the deliverer of the hosts of the Lord, who made a tyrant tremble, and led a people out of bondage to a place of freedom, was the son of poor slaves, and according to the law of the land in which he was born, he ought to have been killed at his birth. Elisha, the prophet of the Lord, who played so remarkable a part in his day, and upon whom Elijah's mantle fell, was ploughing in a field when he was called to the prophetic office. Amos, whose sayings have reached us in the Bible, was an agricultural labourer. Most of the Apostles of our Lord were men of toil and poverty. Paul, the great apostolic missionary, was a tent-maker, and earned his bread whilst engaged in planting churches and breaking the bread of life. And so all down the ages since then.

Most of you have read that wonderful little book called "Pilgrim's Progress." Next to the Bible it has had a larger circulation perhaps than any other book in the world. It has comforted some in all ages since it was written, and

will do in many ages to come. It was written by a man versed in the deep things of God. And who was that man? John Bunyan, the son of a tinker, and himself once a tinker too. And before Bunyan there was a remarkable man who became the hero of the Reformation—Martin Luther. The work that one man accomplished can never be told. Who was he? The son of parents so poor that young Luther had actually to beg his bread. And thus we might continue to give illustration after illustration, until we had taken up all the time for this address, and then we might begin afresh. But we may close this by saying that our blessed Lord Himself was a toiler, and the son of toilers, and has for ever consecrated and blessed all honest necessary human labour.

So I say to you all, Toil on, pray on, fight on, win victories for God. Beat back the enemies of Israel; and if the Ephraimites, lacking courage and genius themselves, despise you, let them. Our Lord said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own." Remember, too, that if men despise you, they despise Him; if they reject you, they reject Him; if they scorn you, they scorn Him; if they persecute you, they persecute Him.

III. THERE ARE SOME WHO CAN'T OR WON'T DO MUCH THEMSELVES, BUT HATE, AND SCORN, AND TRY TO PERSECUTE THOSE WHO DO.

These Ephraimites took no part in the war. They did not answer when the leader called. But they tried to scorn, and despise, and disparage the victors who had risked all. Nay, they determined to do more. Not content with scorn, not content with words, not content with abuse, they determined to practise persecution. "We will burn thine house upon thee with fire." And if they did not do this it was only because they could not.

Yes, that is a ready argument. Burn those you dislike and hate, kill those you don't want, impoverish and put to death those whom you fear and distrust. This was Pharaoh's argument: "These Hebrews are getting to be too numerous. We may have trouble with them. If they increase, they will be strong, and then we can't use them as serfs. Let us kill them. Cast all their male children into the river." It was Herod's argument: "If that new-born king should live and grow, woe betide my chances of holding the reins of office and government. Away to Bethlehem and kill the child. If you can't tell which is he, then kill all the youngsters, so as to make sure of settling the right one."

"We will burn thine house upon thee." Alas! this has often found expression in the bitterness of party strife and religious bigotry. The martyr fires of Gloucester and Smithfield all bear evidence of this. Unable to convince men in argument, and envious and fearful of their success, the powers of darkness have invented infernal machines with which to torture men into silence and submission. Unable to silence men whose lips God had touched as with live coals from His own altar, and whose hearts had felt the power of the living God, they have erected their stakes, piled their faggots, and lit their fires, in which the saints of God, the excellent of the earth, have stood till their flesh was shrivelled and their bones cindered.

"We will burn thine house upon thee with fire," said these men; but they found themselves unable to do it. Some men are hard to kill, and some houses bad to burn. Many a tyrant has found this out. The Eastern king discovered this when he flung the three Hebrews to his seven times heated furnace. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us. But if not, we will not worship the golden image which thou hast set up." You never can

burn such men ; you cannot kill them. You may fling them into fires, you may sometimes singe their garments and scorch their flesh, but you can't consume the men. They will live for ever ; no fire can injure them.

The rulers at Jerusalem said, "You must stop your preaching, or we will burn your house and silence you." But what cared the Apostles? Filled with the newly acquired power which Jesus had sent, they cared not for whips, and prisons, and swords. The rulers tried their hands, but failed. They locked them up at night, but found them gone in the morning.

"We will burn thine house upon thee." It does not seem to have occurred to these cowardly Ephraimites that men who burn other people's houses sometimes burn themselves. It is dangerous to play with edged tools. It is not safe to toy with fire. It may become the instrument of your own torture, the weapon of your own destruction. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword," said Jesus Christ ; and there is for us no higher authority.

When Nebuchadnezzar made his furnace of white heat it seems to have harmed no one except those who flung into it the men whom God protected. "The flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego." When the authorities at Jerusalem stirred up persecution against the Church, and drove men off, they only sent the Gospel further afield, and helped to spread that they sought to destroy. When the Romish authorities bought up copies of the English Bible to fling into the flames, they supplied its translator and printer with money and means to bring out a better edition, and thus burned themselves. It has ever been thus, and always must. It is right that the wicked should be taken in the snares which they set. No one complains much when the unrighteous man falls into the pit which he dug for the godly.

Of all the generations which have read the account of Haman hanging on the gallows he built for innocent Mordecai, there have been found but few to pity.

Some men who are fond of using fire do no harm except to themselves. Whilst it is in some sense only right and just that this should be so, there are cases in which we are sorry for the opposers. Well had it been for these Ephraimites had they shared in the universal rejoicing. Well had it been for them if they had learned wisdom, and ceased from opposition. Their wicked and senseless opposition brought ruin upon themselves. In sheer self-defence the victor turned the sword upon them. Alas for them ! Forty and two thousand of them that day left their dead bodies upon the plains as victims of their folly, and in illustration of our saying that the wicked often injure themselves.

And this is true with the Lord Jesus and His' Gospel. Some men oppose it, reject it, mutilate it, burn it. Like the ancient king who cut it with his penknife, and then cast it to the flames, they use upon it the knives of their criticism, opposition, and hatred. Many reject the Lord Jesus Christ. All such injure themselves. They can never hurt the truth. It will live. They cannot stop the power of Jesus Christ to save men. They may shut the door of their own hearts against Him ; they may keep Him out and bid Him depart, as did the Gadarenes, or seek to destroy Him, as did the men of Nazareth. But Christ lives on and enters open hearts, and renews repentant willing men. The opposer only injures Himself. The waves of the ocean dash against the granite rock, but the rock does not move. But what of the waves ? Broken, they roll back in spray to the ocean out of which they came. " Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken : but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

Men, your relation to Jesus Christ affects your destiny both for time and eternity. Oppose Him, and you injure yourselves. Accept Him, love Him, obey Him, and you will share in the shout of the victory over the world, and in the final triumphant shout which shall hail Him King and Lord of all.

Elijah and Ahab.

THE FALSE AND THE TRUE.

“ And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab ; and I will send rain upon the earth. . . . And the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. . . . There was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.”—
1 KINGS xviii. 1, 24, 29.

A FAMINE is raging in the land. For three years no shower of rain has fallen, and no refreshing dew has come. Hot and scorching sun by day, and close and sultry nights, have parched the land till it is dried, and gapes for want of water. Crops have failed, and food has become scarce and dear. So terrible is the grim want that the poor perish, and the rich have difficulty in keeping alive.

The king, anxious to save his horses, and prevent all his mules perishing, despatches messengers and search-parties into all parts of the land, to lay hands on such forage as can be found.

Such was the condition of things, and such the state of the land, when God sent His servant Elijah to speak with the king Ahab. All this famine, all this suffering and want and pain, have come upon the land because of the wickedness of the ruler, followed in his ways of sin by his too willing people. As this chapter opens, we learn that God has determined to send rain upon the earth ; and the chapter itself gives us an account of the thrilling and important events which happen before the showers fell.

Read the whole chapter, and you will see many useful and important lessons which it can teach us, some of which we propose now to deal with and consider.

I. *THOUGH THERE HAS BEEN A LONG NIGHT OF DARKNESS, FAMINE, DISTRESS, AND PERSECUTION, GOD HAS FIXED THE DAWN OF A BETTER DAY.*

The night was indeed long, the darkness was dense, the famine great, the distress widespread, and the persecution sharp and severe.

God's faithful servants had fallen. The sword of the enemy of the Lord had dripped with the blood of the slain. Some sought refuge in flight, whilst others, of whom the times were not worthy, were hid in dens and caves of the earth, and existed on the bread and water with which Obadiah supplied them, and on the hope which they had in God that He would not fail them in the day of their sorrow and pain.

True religion was all but abolished. The Lord's altars were thrown down. A weak and wicked king was on the throne, with a daring and desperate woman urging him on to deeds of wickedness, in which he seems to have been her ready and willing tool. Right was in the dust. Truth was prostrate. Wrong was exalted, rewarded, honoured, enthroned. Israel's God was forgotten. Baal was glorified. False priests in multitudes led the people astray. Wolves in sheep's clothing there were many. And all this while the servants of the living God dare not lift up their heads! Even Elijah himself has disappeared.

But the dawn of a better day has come. The first grey streaks of the morning are seen above the horizon. The sun is rising, and hope and joy will again be the portion of God's heritage. Out from the caves, down from the rocks and all hiding-places, God's own shall come.

“And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.”

Just so. Mark the particularity of time here given. Some one has said that “God is the timekeeper.” Exactly so. He always knows when the hour strikes. It belongs to Him always to order the night of our famine, and He knows when to strike the hour of our deliverance day. All times and seasons are His. It is His hand which makes spring and summer, and autumn and winter. It belongs to Him to fix all our times and seasons. It is His business to close the heavens, and it is His prerogative to open them again. He takes His own course, and none can force His hand.

Haven’t we sometimes been a little impatient? Haven’t we murmured and wanted to force His hand? More than once we have said, “It is enough, Lord.” We have wondered that we could not make our own experiences, and fix the times of our deliverances.

The aged pilgrim of God has fixed his eyes upon the glory of the setting sun. He has seen the land of gold and glory not far off. Out of that land he has seen hands stretched which he once grasped in love, and which now beckon him along. It may be that he dreams; but he fondly fancies he sees faces in the purple and amber of the sky which gently smile upon him, faces which he

“Loved long since, and lost awhile.”

He may be mistaken, but he fancies he hears voices which call him away from the long weary wilderness of this life to the rest and the peace of the life beyond. Stretching his hand, he says, “Lord, how long? I am tired, and want to come home. I am a lone traveller. I have my shepherd’s

staff, but no flock to tend now. The way is long. Lord, lend me Thy rod and staff, and let me cross over and see that land where night never comes, and where my tears will be dried."

The suffering child of God, bearing the weight of personal affliction and pain, looks up, and says, "My God, how long must I carry this burden of sorrow and pain? Is it not time for deliverance to come?"

The young and strong, eager for the battle, thirsting for work in the vineyard of God, or to free His Church from the tyranny of the oppressor, or to dethrone the wicked Ahab and restore freedom to the saints of the Lord, says, "Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered."

But to us all God says, "Wait, my children. All things work together for good to them that love God. In the third year I will speak to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."

We may, therefore, conclude that, if God be our time-keeper, all will be well. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." It belongs to Him to fix the hour of morning.

Elijah had long waited, perhaps fretted under the restraint. Eager to scatter the priests who had usurped the place of the Lord's chosen, he would be at the work. But God kept him first by the brook, then with the widow, until the right moment.

Sometimes we best serve God by waiting. "Tarry at Jerusalem," was the word to the disciples. "Their strength is to sit still," is a word which may often be fitly spoken to the Lord's people.

II. LET US NOW LOOK AT THE PROPHET AND KING FACE TO FACE.

And what a contrast these two make. Two more opposite characters seldom met. Elijah, the rugged son

of the people, with his rough dress, strong speech, brave spirit, and manly courage. A strong man, a man the key to whose character has been described by one word, "force." A man fearless of the multitude, of mighty faith and heroic boldness, he stands before Ahab the king. What a king this was! Kings have not always, and not often, been the true kingly men. The vast majority of those who have sat on thrones, worn crowns, grasped sceptres, and from whose shoulders has swung the purple of the monarch, could never have reached the kingly post, if that post had always been reserved for the best men of the nations. Selfishness, weakness, littleness, badness, have often been the characteristics of royal rulers.

Among the worst of them stands Ahab. Feeble, selfish, wicked, and cowardly, he possessed but few of the traits which mark the king who is to rule a people. In describing him, the historian says, in 1 Kings xvi. 33, "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

These are the men who stand face to face. Elijah, the embodiment of the pure, the true, and the good—Ahab, the representative of the impure, the false, and the wicked. Elijah on fire with zeal for the honour of God and the glory of His great name, Ahab joined to his idols, hoodwinked by crafty priests, and wedded to his dark ways, which are dragging him and his people down to despair and ruin. You will seldom hear of a better prophet, and will find it hard to read of a worse king.

These two men, now brought face to face, are in open conflict. The prophet opposes the king, and denounces him in no measured terms. Whenever this happens, there is something seriously wrong. When the ruler of the state and the leader of religion stand in open conflict, good men know there is need for alteration and amendment somewhere.

In these days of republics and parliaments and ballot-boxes, when King Demos rules, when good government is secured, and when the poorest of us is protected by the great power of the state, we can hardly understand the condition of the people in those far off times when monarchs were supreme. It frequently happened that the lonely faithful prophet was the only tribune of the people. Between the tyranny of the king and the destruction of the people he was often the only bulwark. His was often the only voice raised against oppression, in favour of the people, and on behalf of liberty, mercy, and justice.

It should ever be remembered by Bible readers that the prophet's work was mainly to expound the will of God to the men of his time. It is but a poor estimate of the ancient Hebrew seer to regard him only, or chiefly, as a teller of future events. Usually he was a man of intellectual vigour and deep spiritual insight. Standing high above his fellows, like the highest hill, he was the first to catch the sunlight of God. When others around him were still enveloped in the mist and fog of darkness and error, he breathed the clear atmosphere of heaven, and read the mind and will of God. It was his business to expound the will of God to the men of his day, and to enforce upon rulers and ruled alike obedience to that Will. It was for him to assert the august majesty of the Lord of Hosts, and assure men that God was King, whoever sat on thrones. It was his work to encourage the poor and the oppressed, and as far as possible seek redress and help for them. And he was commissioned to thunder the judgments of God against evildoers, even though their heads were cased in crowns.

We often see the prophet doing this. The Scriptures furnish us with many illustrations. In the Book of Exodus we find Moses before Pharaoh demanding the

freedom of the people, and threatening punishment against the king. We see Samuel in the presence of Saul denouncing his disobedience. We find Nathan before King David, daring to rebuke the powerful king for his awful sin in the death of Uriah, and saying boldly to the monarch, "Thou art the man." And here in this interview before us, we hear Elijah saying, in words that must have burned themselves into the soul of Ahab, if he had any soul at all, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."

Here, then, we learn that in Elijah and Ahab we have not simply two men in conflict, but two principles. Right and wrong stand face to face. Truth and error, purity and corruption, faithfulness and treachery, light and darkness, all face each. This conflict is between the forces which make for freedom, justice, and God, on the one hand, and for oppression, bondage, and irreligion, on the other.

We see this same conflict in the strife between Jesus Christ and those who killed Him. Between the Apostles and the Jewish rulers, between Paul and Felix, between the Apostle of the Gentiles and the mob at Ephesus. All along the ages this conflict has continued. It broke out with fury and strength when that German monk, Martin Luther, nailed to the gates of Wittenberg his challenge to the powers of the Romish Church. It goes on to-day. We sometimes see it even on the floor of the House of Commons. You and I have to carry it on. It must continue until truth prevails. It can never cease until Christ is King. He shall ultimately conquer. Every evil shall be destroyed. Every lie, every evil thing shall be abolished. Death and hell shall finally perish, for "Christ must reign, till He hath put all enemies under

His feet; and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

And if the end of this conflict be delayed, we need not despair. Winter sometimes lingers long. And even after the spring days come, often the hand of winter seems again to grip the earth. But summer with its flowers and glories always appears. And the coming of the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings is not less sure. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad." Fountains shall arise in the desert. And the glory of the Lord shall be seen in the latter days.

III. CONSIDER NOW ELIJAH'S CHALLENGE WHICH THIS CHAPTER DETAILS IN SUCH GRAPHIC LANGUAGE.

"Gather all your prophets together to Mount Carmel." Come in your hundreds. Bring all the influence, all the power you can. We will meet at the mount. And there let God and Baal be put to the test. We will decide which is false and which is true.

And if ever a good common sense proposal were made, surely it is here.

The servant of God need never be afraid of challenging error. Infidelity and scepticism are loud-mouthed and blatant. Let us challenge them. Let us put them to the test. Bring them to the mount, and let us see what they can do. "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God." That is good. It sounds well. We like it much. Show us the answer. Let us see the fire which you have kindled to burn up dross and sin.

What have you done for the world? You dislike that which we hold to be true and dearly love. You say it is not to be held, should not be followed. Let us see what you have to offer? What have you done to bless and save the world? Take us to see some of the dark homes which

you have brightened, and made light and beautiful as a summer day. Tell us where we can find them; we would like to see them. Where are the men whose broken hearts you have healed and filled with the laughter of real joy and gladness? It will help us if you can produce them to our inspection. What are the names and addresses of the wrecked and bankrupt men that you have lifted up and put on their feet again, with a new start in life and new hopes to fill the soul? Where shall we meet the noble characters you have made out of the waifs and strays and wastrels of the world? We want to see the schools you have built among the people, and the hospitals for the sick, the asylums for the needy, and the charities for the poor. Produce the widows who bless your name, and the orphans who pray for you, because you have been fathers to them. "Let the God that answereth by fire be the God."

When the authorities at Jerusalem saw the man who had been lame, and whom the apostles by the power of God had cured, they were not able to speak against it. Produce your healed men, and silence us in the same way.

If you ask, What has Christ done? there is an immediate reply. Whole continents will stand up to give you answer. Before his triumphant march down the centuries, tyrants have trembled on their thrones, and their crowns have shook on their brows. Systems, ancient and venerable, have tottered and fallen at His presence. Superstition, idolatry, cruelty, and error have fled. Whole nations have been born and come out of the darkness of heathen night.

Time would fail to tell of the blessings of Christ and His truth. But we know them in our hearts, in our lives, in our homes. We see them in our own country, and we see or hear of them in others. It is indeed true that

“ Blessings abound where’er He reigns :
The prisoner leaps to loose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest.”

IV. IN CONCLUSION, CONSIDER THE FAILURE OF THE FALSE, AND THE SUCCESS OF THE TRUE.

This contrast is instructive. On the side of Baal there is all that many men consider best and most desirable in a nation. Wealth, influence, education, social position—all are ranged on the side of the false. On the other side, the prophet seems to have been alone. If any of the prophets whom Obadiah had hid, fed, and saved were there to cheer Elijah by their presence, we do not hear of them. So far as we know, he was alone. One man among a multitude. No friendly voice to encourage him in his great effort. No council to advise and assist him. Alone ; and yet not alone, for God was with him.

This was not the only time the servant of God has been alone. Sacred and secular history furnish instances, and not a few. The greatest of all was the Saviour Himself, who trod the wine-press alone that we might have the unspeakable blessings and glories of His redemption.

But the false failed. With all the prophets, with all the influence of the court, with all their wealth, with all the men of light and leading on their side, the false priests failed—absolutely, completely, ignominiously failed. Failure is written upon the brow of every false system. Ultimately it will be true of them all that there is no voice nor any to answer. And a system which fails to bring fire from heaven is doomed to die.

Set against their failure the success of the true. With fine scorn and irony does Elijah taunt the people. Take your time. Have your chance. Try again. “ Cry aloud :

for he is a god." It is a fine sight to see this man prostrate before them all, after he has set up the old altar. It must have touched many a heart to hear him call the people back to the faith of their fathers. He came with no new religion. His prayer was, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God."

Even while he prayed the answer came. Flashing out of the heavens like lightning the fire fell and consumed the sacrifice. Struck dumb with awe and wonder, the crowd looked on for awhile, and then burst out into a rapturous shout, "The Lord, He is the God." Truth was triumphant.

This is the God that men need to-day. The God that hears and answers shall be ours. The God that saves us from troubled consciences and consumes our sin is the God we will serve. We want our tears dried up. We want a Saviour who can plant the flower of resurrection and hope over our tombs. And all this we get in Jesus Christ and His glorious religion.

We need not follow these false teachers through their shame, dismay, and punishment. We rather rejoice now in the glad faith we have. Elijah's God is our God.

But does it happen to-day that among us there are any who have followed the false? Have any of us, like this ancient people, left the faith of our fathers? Have we paid heed to the world and its charms? If so, let us take warning. The false cannot live. It matters but little where it is found, it is but short lived. No influence, position, or wealth can save us if we remain with the false. A life of sin is a false life, a life out of harmony with the will of God. If that has been ours, let us at once and for ever forsake it, and henceforth, in God's strength, walk in the ways of truth and goodness.

God on the Side of the Few and the True.

“Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s.”—2 CHRON. xx. 15.

OLIVER CROMWELL and his Ironsides often marched to battle singing the Old Hundredth. And it is said, that on one memorable occasion he ordered his men on to the attack, exclaiming, “Arise, for the Lord hath delivered them into our hands.”

Whatever one may think and say about the righteousness of the wars in which those old soldiers of the Commonwealth took part, it must have been enough to stir the soul of any man to see the Puritan veterans kneel before their God, and then approach the enemy to the strains of the Psalms of David, sung by men who were in deadly earnest, and fought, as they believed, for the honour of their God, and the destruction of His enemies.

But Cromwell’s was not the only army which sang God’s praises in the midst of warfare. Between two and three thousand years before he was born, the army of Jehoshaphat went to battle chanting its religious songs. The chapter from which our text is taken gives us a thrilling account of psalm-singing soldiers who, though greatly outnumbered, went forth with joy, resting upon the promise of their God. The Lord of Hosts was with them. The God of Jacob was their refuge.

But it is not our purpose now to follow this line of thought, we rather desire to learn a few practical lessons

from this chapter which may be a help to us in our life and work. We may notice how men seek God in emergencies ; how God is often on the side of the faithful few, against the multitude ; how most good movements have been in the minority ; and how all workers for truth should be encouraged.

I. IT IS REMARKABLE HOW MEN CALL UPON GOD IN THEIR DISTRESS.

Jehoshaphat and his people were in a great emergency. A mighty host, which threatened Judah with extermination, was advancing. What was to be done ? What could be done ? How could they avoid this great sorrow which threatened them ? Is there no escape ? The sword of the combined forces of their enemies must surely soon reek with the blood of the Jew, and the last man fall before the victorious hosts of the enemies of God.

Read the early portion of the chapter. The king felt the difficulty, and knew the danger. He and his people assembled before the Lord, and laid their trouble before Him. In their distress they cried unto God, and they did not call in vain.

All along the avenue of time the same thing has happened. Nothing is more remarkable than the readiness with which men seek God in emergencies. Not only is this true of the Hebrew race who inhabited the strip of country called Palestine, but it is true of every nation under heaven which has any national religion and believes in a God at all. Our own history furnishes many examples. Every school-boy has read how, in the days when Elizabeth was queen, this nation was threatened with destruction. The enemies of our country and the opponents of our Protestantism sent out a great force to crush and subdue the people of these isles. The Spaniards, backed and blessed by the

Pope, at enormous cost of money and men, fitted up the greatest fleet of ships which the world had then seen, and despatched them against the British nation. Flying the consecrated banner of the so-called Vicar of Christ, they came to put the crucifix in the place of Christ; to destroy the reformed religion, and reintroduce the reign of Rome; to rekindle the fires of Smithfield and Gloucester, and all the butchery and brutality and refined cruelty of the Inquisition, carrying with them the instruments of torture, and to bring our proud queen to her knees in submission.

How did our fathers act in that great emergency? What was their course of conduct in the presence of so grave a crisis? Like Jehoshaphat of old time, the monarch gathered her people about her, proclaimed a solemn fast, a day of worship and prayer. Our island home was in danger. Throughout the land the Lord was sought. By prayer and fasting, and waiting upon God, our people prepared themselves for the day of conflict. Nor did their God fail them. The wicked object was defeated; the great ships of the Armada were destroyed, but few escaping to tell the story of a disastrous and deserved defeat.

What is true of nations is true of individuals. Pain, sorrow, danger, and trouble drive men to God. Nor is this confined to believers alone. Let danger threaten, and even the careless, the indifferent, the unbelieving will call upon God. I saw a letter which was written by a man who crossed the Atlantic in an emigrant ship. They encountered a fierce storm. From experience, I can testify that a storm at sea is indeed a terrible thing. In a storm on land you may feel a measure of security which strong buildings can give you. But when you are at sea your only chance is the strength of the ship, the skill and courage of the sailors, and the providence of God. There are no back doors out of which to step; no friendly police-

man, or stray neighbour to open a door for you. My friend, in describing the storm, said that while it lasted men prayed to God for help who had but seldom prayed before.

May we not, therefore, at this point remark that sometimes our very sorrows become our blessings, our emergency brings emancipation, our loss leads us to the Cross, our days of darkness bring angels of light, and our dangers drive us to our God?

I am far from thinking that all who call upon God in danger and difficulty remain true to Him when the clouds are removed. Have I not seen men with pale faces in the presence of death vow to be the Lord's faithful servants if He would but spare them? Have not I, and have not all ministers of religion, seen such men mercifully spared, and add to their former wickedness by forgetting the vows they made in their sorrow?

Still, our very sorrows often send us closer to God. It was always so. It was so in the days of old when the good man exclaimed, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word." Does not the good old book tell us that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth"?

Ye afflicted sorrowing ones, look up. If your way is dark, it may lead you into the light of heaven. If the clouds are black, they have a silver lining. If you cannot see God's face just now, you may feel His hand if you will but put out yours. I think we must thank God for the emergency—for anything which drives us to Him.

And what a blessing He does not turn a deaf ear when we do come. If, to our shame, we forget our God in the day of prosperity, He does not shut the door in our faces in our adversity. The Prodigal who left home, and plunged into indulgence and sin, in which there was but little room

for God and goodness, got into a strait place. Poor, penniless, friendless, disgraced, he turned his face homeward. There, in the old home he had forsaken, was a father's eye to look for him, a father's heart to welcome him, and loving arms to receive him. When our Lord was paying the penalty of the world's sin on the Cross, the thief, in his last extremity and pain, sought the Saviour's sympathy and help. He did not seek in vain. No one ever does. Ours is a God of love; He keeps mercy for thousands, and pardons iniquity and sin! "Be not afraid nor dismayed," therefore, but lift up your eyes unto the hills from whence cometh all help, and let the very pains of life bring you nearer to Him who still says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

II. GOD IS OFTEN ON THE SIDE OF THE FEW.

Was it not so in this case? "Be not dismayed by reason of this great multitude." You are outnumbered, but what of that? The forces of several kings are combined against you, but heed them not. It is the Lord's battle. What are numbers to Him? Assembled before the court of God's house, the king rehearsed to his people how God had all power and might, and how He had saved His people of old time, and would not fail them now.

God on the side of the few! Has it not always been so? God does not govern the world by counting noses. In these days of government by majorities we need to be reminded now and again that all wisdom and goodness are not found in a majority vote. We make our speeches, argue our points, pull our opponents to pieces, look for and magnify their defects, entirely overlook their excellences, and then ask for a show of hands. With breathless anxiety we count the votes, and the highest number puts Black in, and the lowest keeps White out.

All history, ancient and modern, shows that the majority has not always been God's method. Dip in where you like, either to sacred history or to what men call profane, and you will find God with the few and the true.

When Ahab was king there was trouble in the land. He abolished true religion, made the land red with the blood of the Lord's prophets, and would not have left one alive had not Obadiah hid them and fed them. There was famine, dearth, distress, and death. Elijah appeared before the monarch, and what a contrast these two men present to us! Ahab, weak, luxurious, selfish, passionate—Elijah, bold, strong, rugged, anxious for the public good and the honour of God. This man came to the king and addressed him in fearless words, and made a public challenge to a public test regarding the true God. How was this test to be applied? By counting votes? The Lord's prophet had thus been in a hopeless minority. He stood alone for God. He was the only one who faced the national crisis. His was the only voice raised for God and righteousness. Against him stood the king, the queen, the court, the false priests and prophets. What a majority! And yet he came off victorious. Why? Because God was on his side. It was the Lord's battle he fought.

Did not the same thing happen in Babylon? When the three Hebrews dared to stand against the proclamation which required all men to render idolatrous homage to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, they would not dishonour their God, they would not violate their conscience. Flung to the fierce flames of the furnace, they were uninjured, because God was on the side of the few and the true. Did not the same thing happen in that same land when Daniel the good was cast among the lions? He was able to say, "My God hath shut the lions' mouths." When Gideon and his three hundred men went forth with their pitchers and

trumpets, they were victorious against overwhelming odds, because God was with them.

When our Saviour sent forth His disciples to convert the world, He promised to be with them. What a hopeless task it did seem upon which they entered. They were few and poor. No influence at court, no wealth to sustain them, no army to fight for them. Their leader put to death by the most shameful method of executing the worst criminals. Their doctrines ridiculed, their pretensions despised, they had but a small chance of success if votes were to be counted. Yet these unlettered fishermen, these despised tax-gatherers, went everywhere preaching and teaching Jesus Christ. They were persecuted, driven from city to city, cast into prison, some of them were killed, but their principles were victorious. Ancient systems of religion tottered and fell. Customs and traditions, hoary with antiquity, gave way before the triumphal progress of the doctrines taught by this handful of hated enthusiasts. God was on the side of the few and the true.

From that day to this there has scarce been a time when this principle has lacked illustration. John Wicklyfe, fighting against bigotry and sin, lived and wrote and preached, and finally died a peaceful death in his own parish. Martin Luther was assailed by all the malice, and envy, and hatred of a proud and dominant Romish Church. His ruin was compassed. Bulls were issued against him, but he dared to cast them to the flames. He was summoned to their councils and went. In spite of all the rage and malice of men with but few scruples, he died a peaceful death. God was on the side of the few and the true.

The history of our own country abounds with illustrations of this same principle. Time would fail me to tell of Clarkson and his struggles to free the slave, and how the

movement was successful; of John Bright and Richard Cobden in their efforts to cheapen the people's bread. God often stands on the side of the faithful few. All the records of the past abound with instances of it. And to-day His word is, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude."

III. MANY OF THE GREAT MOVEMENTS OF TO-DAY HAVE BEEN IN THE MINORITY.

Yes, some of the most glorious agencies of these days were once small and poor. The strongholds for God which we prize to-day are what they are because of the faith, the courage, the devotion, and the patience of the few with whom the Lord worked.

To go no farther back, let us look at that religious institution called Methodism. To-day its fold shelters millions of men and women. It has spread itself into all lands, and sends its missionaries almost everywhere. Where did it come from? How came it into being? It began in the piety of a handful of young men at Oxford. John and Charles Wesley, appalled by the poverty and sin of the people, determined to do something for their salvation. But what could they do? They and their movement were in a hopeless minority. But to-day it is a joy to the whole earth. Though so large, so powerful, so good now, and though so feeble at its start, it is but of recent growth. There are men living now whose fathers knew and talked with John Wesley, the founder.

The same is true of the Sunday School movement, one of the most glorious auxiliaries the Church of Christ ever had. It began last century with one man in the city of Gloucester. Little more than half a century ago, a few men determined to try and make their country sober, being so themselves. They were in a minority. But to-day the

Temperance movement has laid hold of the heart, thought, and life of the nation. Most good movements have been in the minority.

Take but one more illustration, and that one at our own doors. We have all heard of the Salvation Army. What a mighty force it has become! How it is spreading itself all over the world! Its blood and fire banners have been seen in most lands. Its founder is still alive and at work. It began with William Booth, down in Whitechapel, and was in an almost hopeless minority some twenty-five years ago.

IV. ALL THIS SHOULD ENCOURAGE EVERY WORKER FOR PURITY, TRUTH, AND GOD.

Many of you are trying to make the world a brighter and better place for men to live in. But there are times when you feel discouraged and sad. You are alone, or almost so.

You are alone in your family. Of all its members not one expresses any sympathy with you or for your religion. Yours is the only voice which ever sounds God's praises in your house. No brother, sister, parent, or partner ever kneels with you in prayer. If your petitions cease, yours will be a prayerless home. Your heart is sore and your spirit sad.

Or perhaps you are placed in a workshop with many men, not one of whom ever darkens the door of the house of God. You desire to witness for God, and win your fellow-workmen. You are alone, almost disheartened.

Another feels a sense of weariness and discouragement in the mission work undertaken. No one seems to pay much heed to your message. Nobody seems any the better for your labours. It seems as if Satan will win all the people. You are alone. What is to be done? What is

to be done! Why, simply hold on. Let your disappointment drive you to God. Let your weakness bring you to the Strong for strength. Remember that your Saviour was alone in His earthly family. His brothers and His sisters opposed Him. They sought to restrain Him. They believed Him mad. Remember, too, that His countrymen rejected Him. Jerusalem, the chief city of His nation, stained itself with His very blood.

Ever remember that one with God on his side is in a majority. Paul was in much weakness, much sorrow, much pain, yet he was able to exclaim, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." David was alone, little, and young. But with God on his side he brought down Goliath, removed the reproach from his country, and delivered it from its enemies. Our business is to keep right on, making sure that we are where God puts us, and are trying to do the work He commits to our care. If this be true of us, ever in our loneliness we may with truth exclaim, as did our blessed Master, "I am alone, yet not alone, for the Father is with Me."

Now, in concluding this address, let me ask you all, are you on the side of truth, of freedom, of justice, of goodness, and of God? I do not, I will not ask if you are on the popular side; but are you on that side on which God stands? One of my children once said, when asked which side she was on during a contested election, "I am on the side which wins." Yes, thousands, multitudes are generally ready to be on that side. Many who dare not stand in the conflict are ever ready to share in the shout of victory, and to enjoy its spoils. I will not ask you are you on the side which men applaud, but are you where you can hear the voice of God exclaiming, "Be not afraid, the battle is not yours, but God's"?

A Revival of Religion.

“And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great : and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord.”—2 KINGS xxiii. 1, 2.

A YOUNG and active king now sits on Judah's throne. Our text finds him at the age of six-and-twenty, in the midst of reforms which might have appalled many a man of twice his age. His father, whose throne the son now occupies, fell a victim to the hand of the assassin in his own house and among his own servants. At the tender age of eight the people proclaim Josiah king, seat him on the throne of David, and put the reins of government into his hands.

Never did any king ascend the steps of the throne in such dark and painful times, and never did any king bring more light and judgment to bear upon them. Never had there been such irreligion, superstition, and idolatry in the land as when Amon, his father, was murdered ; and never did any of Judah's kings leave the land so purged and free as Josiah. For half a century and more Manasseh, his grandfather, had lived and reigned in corruption, sin, and neglect of God. The Temple fell into a state of dilapidation and ruin, the altars of God were forsaken, the noble traditions of the Jews were set aside, and the written law of God seems to have been entirely lost. The

upper classes and the lower alike were steeped in heathenish practices, and lived in absolute neglect of the God of their fathers.

This was Josiah's inheritance, for during the two short years that his father occupied the throne things went worse rather than better. This was the condition of the nation when the boy of eight donned the purple. This was the state of religion and morals when the new child king stepped to the place of power and the seat of authority. No king before him ever had such a sad and dark inheritance, and no king ever faced the task before him in a better spirit. No occupant of Judah's throne before him ever managed better, and none that came after him ever did so well. He found his kingdom full of idols, and left it worshipping the true God.

Our text finds him at the age of twenty-six. The earlier years of his reign he has occupied in many and various reforms. Now we find him in the midst of a revival of religion, the like of which the world has but seldom seen. The king, the court, the elders, the rulers, and the people all felt its power. Beginning at the house of God, it thrilled through all classes, and changed the whole religious life and thought of the land. And it is this revival of religion that I desire now to consider. There are many hearts longing for a revival in the Church of God to-day. Not a few of the saints of the Lord have felt the power of the presence of God in their own souls, and they want the Church and the world to feel it too. But how this is to be done may not be quite so clear to them. If we consider how this revival was brought about, we may get some light.

I. THIS REVIVAL BEGAN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD.

The king summoned the people. He had a great and important representative gathering assembled at Jerusalem.

They were not to meet at the palace, they were not summoned to the House of Commons, they were not called to the House of Lords. They met at the Lord's house.

And surely that was the best place. In God's house, in God's presence, we are to assemble and look for Him. It is there we may expect the Shechinah fire, no longer visible over the ark between the cherubim, but felt in force and power in human hearts. It is there we must seek for renewed vigour and Divine influence. It is there we must look for the Lord Himself, and pray Him to strengthen and quicken us. It is there we must come for the deepening of our faith in the Eternal, enlarging of our courage and zeal, and the expansion of our Christian hope. It is there all revival must begin. I do not ignore the duty of private devotion. He who neglects it suffers irreparable loss. He who has no private praying place is indeed an object of pity. It is in private devotion and prayer that we can talk to God as friend with friend. But this does not obviate the necessity of public worship. It creates the longing desire for it. The more I pray in private the more I want to be with others in public worship. Habitual neglecters of the one are usually habitual neglecters of the other. When I have seen God in the solitude of my own room, it confirms my faith in God when I meet in worship with others who have seen Him too.

If, then, we are to have a revival, it must begin at God's house. Votes of the House of Commons cannot do it. Acts of Parliament will never make men religious. Decrees of state will not fill empty churches with men and women full of the Holy Ghost and fire. All this has been tried. Some two or three hundred years ago soldiers were stationed at the doors of the parish churches, not so much to see who attended as to note who was absent. Fine, imprisonment, exile and worse, fell to the lot of those who did

not fill their places. These things did not succeed. They never can. Fine, sword, fire, and persecution failed, and always will. They are the instruments of a past and barbarous age. They are the instruments of Satan, fit only to be used by his own chosen servants. The State cannot rule the Church in its religious life. A man's relation to God is a matter for the man himself. It is too subtle, too tender, too sacred, too deep to be touched by Acts of Parliament. It is time all talk about the State ruling the Church should come to an end. The hour will soon strike in which all it means will cease. The right thing, the wise thing, the ultimate thing will be for the Church to rule the State. She will send her sons and daughters into all public places with clean hands, true hearts, and with such a deep sense of righteousness and truth, that bad men shall hide their heads in shame. God speed the day.

But if we are to have a revival in which the people shall flock to God's house, God's house itself must be revived.

And perhaps there is great need of this. I sometimes wonder if we are not in an age in which vast numbers have come to consider that religion is a mere profession. That it consists of certain ceremonies to be gone through, a number of forms to be observed, and certain collections to be made. Is there not an idea abroad that a man may live a life of oppression, greed, selfishness, and sin, and then atone for all by building a church, or endowing some hospital, or setting up an orphanage? Is not there much danger of men coming to rest in mere ceremonials, externals, rather than in the inward and the real? When Church dignitaries quarrel about burning candles in their churches in the daytime, how many more clothes the priest shall wear in church than out, whether he shall turn his back to the people or face them, and when they

take one another into court to decide how many ornaments they shall put on the tables in their churches, plain men are apt to say, I find none of this in the four gospels, and if this be religion I don't want it.

But do not let us look over the wall at other people, let us rather see to the condition of our own garden. Is there no coldness, no formality, no neglect here? Are we as earnest, as regular, as enthusiastic, and as warm as we ought to be? A dead Church will not quicken dead men. There must be live men in the Church if it is to save men alive. A cold Church but seldom warms cold hearts. Many years ago I had occasionally to preach in a chapel in Birmingham. The congregation was not large. There was no fireplace, and no apparatus for warming the church. I had to conduct service one bitterly cold morning. When we were some way through with the sermon, I felt so cold that I could scarcely speak. I stopped in the sermon and said, "My friends, you must put a warming apparatus in this place. You can't worship God as you should when you are cold."

I shall be told that if you want to warm the Church in its spiritual life, you must warm the pulpit. This is often said. A certain congregation had met to decide in what part of the church a new stove should be put. "Place it in the pulpit," said one old man, "for if it is warm up there we shall be warm enough everywhere else." It is true that the pulpit often warms the pew. But, alas! the pew often chills the pulpit. If icebergs are in the pews, the cold will reach the platform.

If there is to be a great revival, the Church, both pulpit and pew, must be on fire with revived zeal. And to bring this about, we must all know more and have more of the power of the Holy Ghost in our hearts and lives. May it speedily be so.

II. IN THIS REVIVAL MEN CAME BACK TO THE WORD OF GOD.

The long-lost book was found. The word of the Lord, hid, slighted, neglected, lost, was discovered and brought to the young king. What a discovery Hilkieah made when he found the Bible! What a treasure he dug up! What a mine of precious ore! What a valuable find!

The young king was quick to see its importance, value, and worth. It was read; its warnings heeded, its promises believed. And it was read to all the people. What an effect that book produced.

Even so. I have no faith in any revival without the word of God. Read the history of the great revivals in the Church, and you will find the word of God in it all. Beginning with the Bereans right down to our day you will find it so.

John Wicklyfe was a great power in his day. He is rightly called the Morning Star of the Reformation. He sent his Lollard preachers through the land to tell the story of God's love. As he translated the Bible into the language of the people, his preachers went and read it and preached it to common folk.

Read the history of the Reformation, and what will you find there? Martin Luther is its hero. That marvellous man, like his Lord and Master, was a son of the people, and began life in a poor and comfortless home. Reared in the faith and practice of the Romish Church, he came to know it well, and early saw its weakness. What was it made him take his reforming action? Have we not read that he found a copy of the Scriptures—the neglected, deserted, forsaken Bible? He read it. It did its work. It troubled his heart, it moved his soul, until at last, rising from his knees on the steps of the so-called sacred stairs at Rome, he went out declaring that the just shall live by

faith. It was the Bible made him the great reformer. It was the Bible which the reformers accepted as a sufficient rule of faith and life.

Later on there was another great movement in England which made a deep impression upon the religious life and thought of our country. In the eighteenth century the religious life of the Churches of this land was, to say the least, not in a very flourishing condition. The masses were ignorant, the upper classes not much better, many of them. In the churches, among those who attended them, there was a coldness, formality, indifference, and state of morals which shocks men of the world to-day. From the gates of Oxford—remarkable for many an extraordinary movement—there went out a few young men filled with fire and the Holy Ghost, and a passionate love for men—John and Charles Wesley, George Whitfield, and some others. The great movement which they began laid the foundation of Methodism, which has grown into such a mighty religious force, touching the life of men in all lands.

How did the founders of Methodism proceed? They went forth to call the masses of the people to a neglected Bible. This was their book; this was the armoury whence they drew the weapons which brought down the strongholds of sin; this was the storehouse from which they continually drew fresh supplies of saving truth; and this, backed by the power of the Holy Ghost, was the secret of the great success of the evangelical revival in which Methodism was born, and all other Churches touched and quickened.

More modern times still will furnish us illustration of the same great historical fact. Living to-day there is a marvellous man called Moody. He has a friend and colleague called Sankey. These two men may be regarded as the greatest living revival agents. The United Kingdom

and America—indeed, the whole civilised world—have felt the force of the work which God has used them to do. Is there a man in these isles who has not heard of them? Is there a home in which their religious songs have not been heard? Is there a Sunday-school child who has not lisped some of them?

Who and what is Moody? A child of the people and son of toil, an absolute stranger to the universities, and in earlier years almost destitute of the common elements of education. Yet this man went forth with the Bible in his hand, the love of God in his soul, and a passionate desire to lead men to the Saviour. And what marvels he has wrought! What victories he has gained! He read and knew his Bible, and he knew but little else. And what a force this proved in his hands! Who that heard him discourse in his simple way on the Atonement will ever forget it? While he preached the Gospel Sankey sang it. The Bible lay at the root of it all, and God blessed the honouring of His word, and gained for Himself great victories.

We, too, need to pay more attention to the living word of God. We are apt to look for and depend upon the word of man. If that is not eloquent, if that is not such as to tickle our fancy, we often return from God's house displeased, dissatisfied, and unblessed. What a mistake! What a blunder! Let us look for the God-sent message; let us hearken for the voice of the living God; let us hear what He has to say to us.

We have fallen upon times when fierce attacks have been made upon the Scriptures. The hottest fires of criticism have been turned upon the book. These can do it but little harm. God's word has often been flung to the flames. But that can never harm it. Out of the fire it comes with purified life and force. If it is true, men cannot destroy it. If it be God's word, men will never

be able to make it perish. The greatest insult we can put upon the Bible is to neglect it. It suffers more from lack of reading on the part of its friends than from all the assaults of its enemies.

If you would have a deep knowledge of Divine things, read your Bible and ponder over its marvellous revelations. If you would experience in your own souls a quickening of religious life and an increase in holy zeal, ponder well the pages of Divine truth. If you would have a revival of religion in the Church of God which shall touch the life of the people outside, then the Church must let the word of God be read and understood.

III. A REVIVED CHURCH WILL MAKE ITSELF FELT IN THE WORLD.

This assembling at the house of God, and the solemn and reverent reading of the Bible, made a deep impression upon the people.

The king dedicated himself to God. And surely that is the right thing for a king to do. The king should lead in all good things. Alas! monarchs have often been the first in sin, in shame, in rebellion against God. Here the king dedicated himself to Jehovah, and all the leaders and representatives did the same. All the people felt the influence, and there was a national movement. Public life was affected, the power of God was felt, men put away their idols, and came back to the faith of their fathers. The Church, the Temple, religion became a greater force in the national life.

The Church of God is still a power in our land. In spite of its coldness, formality, and need of revival it is a potent force. Its teaching, its influence, its lessons have not been lost upon our people. See what has come to pass. Drunkenness was once practised by "gentlemen" without

any loss of character. To be "as drunk as a lord" was the order of the day. All that has been changed. A liberal use of profane and unclean language was once quite the correct thing, both among men and women. Now it is not so. Juvenile crime was appalling by its magnitude. We have greatly lessened this, and it is still diminishing. Gross ignorance was the lot of the common people, but now it is an offence against the law to allow any child in England to be kept from school.

I shall, of course, be told that I am now dealing with matters which do not concern the Church. Thoughtless people will say that it is the Temperance movement which has changed public opinion respecting drunkenness. Some will say that education has the credit of lessening juvenile crime, and Parliament passed the Education Acts. It is a matter of but small moment who takes the credit of these great and grand improvements. The Church has brought them about. The Temperance movement is of the Church. The Education Acts were the outcome of the Sunday-school movement, and that is the work of the Church. The Church of God is a mightier force to-day than ever.

But when the servants of God truly understand their Master and their mission, what rapid strides forward will be taken. A revived and quickened Church, alive to its great tasks, and to its great powers, and to its great opportunities, will mightily influence the whole life of the people. The poor will have in it their warmest friend. The causes of their poverty will be examined, and those which are preventable will be dealt with. The oppressor will have in it his bitterest foe. It will matter but little whether he be an east-end sweater or a rich west-end shark, he will be opposed and condemned by it. The Church will refuse to recognise the claims of the men who have piled up great fortunes in the liquor traffic, or on the under-paid labour

of the poor. It will carefully scrutinise the wealth of the millionaires, even though they found libraries, build schools, and support charities.

In a church near Birmingham a collection was taken one day which had in it a threepenny-piece which attracted attention. A threepenny-bit is not unusual in collections. But this was a particular one. One of the men counting the collection put his finger on the threepenny-piece and said, "I will give a shilling for this." Why? Some ingenious man had engraved the Lord's prayer upon the coin. Every coin in the coffers of the Church should have the Lord's prayer upon it. A revived and renewed Church will refuse to have any with the curses of the poor upon them. It will decline to take any gold cankered with the tears of widows and orphans, and rusted with the groans of the crushed and despised toiler.

The day is coming, and it ought to come soon, when the Church of the living God shall touch and bless our lives in all their varying moods. "All religion has relation to life, the life of religion is to do good," is a wise and pregnant saying. Let each one do his best to hasten the day when this shall be understood and practised by all.

It is an old saying that we can only mend the world as we mend its individuals. If men are to improve in the mass, they must improve in units. It is another way of saying that all reform begins at home; and the meaning of that word home, in this connection, is to begin at self. If, therefore, you desire to see the Church quickened and revived, see to your own individual spiritual life. If you desire that Jesus Christ shall rule in His Church, let Him rule fully in you. If you wish to see the Holy Spirit moving powerfully among men, let Him have His rightful sway over your own heart and life. If you desire to see men upright, honest, good, and godly, be all that yourselves. It is thus that Christ will hasten the coming of His kingdom.

Religious Intolerance.

"We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us. . . . But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."—DAN. iii. 16-18.

IN Farringdon Street, very near to Ludgate Circus, in the city of London, there stands a great building known as the Memorial Hall. It is the central home of the great historic body of English Independents, most of whose societies have offices in the building. It stands on a famous site. Part of the Old Fleet prison is said to have been on the ground on which this building stands. In that prison not a few of the fathers of English Nonconformity were immured for conscience' sake.

On the wall of the Memorial Hall, near to the main entrance, there is an inscription which says that the hall was erected as a memorial to fidelity of conscience of the 2000 ministers who, in 1662, left their homes, their churches, their flocks, their livings, rather than obey the Act of Uniformity. Among them were some of the most pious, learned, and able ministers of the Church in England. The Church from which they were driven was all the poorer for their exclusion, and it suffered not a little owing to their loss. But the history of heroism, courage, manliness, was greatly enlarged. Seldom has the world seen such nobility of purpose, such self-denial, or such real sacrifice for principle.

It is common with those who have not sufficient information to entitle them to speak with authority, to say that this was the birthtime of the English Congregationalists. This is not so. Separatist, Independent churches can be traced for a full hundred years before the Act of Uniformity as having an existence in England; but Nonconformity goes much farther back even than this.

When the Apostles stood before the rulers at Jerusalem, shortly after our risen Lord had ascended to heaven, they were charged to be silent. Orders were issued that they should obey the rulers of the day under pains and penalties. But while they lived they could not be silenced. As soon as they let them go they went straight out to begin again to preach Jesus Christ in the way they were forbidden to do. They stood for liberty of conscience.

But we may go much farther back than that. More than two thousand years ago we find a splendid example of Nonconformity, and a noble protest against religious intolerance. These three Hebrews, whose brave words we have in our text, stand among the earliest Nonconformists as they do among the first martyrs flung to the flames. Their courage, their fearlessness, their heroic faith and confidence in God alike deserve all praise. Their conduct was an honour to the human race, and their defence of religious freedom a conspicuous example to all men of all after time.

The passage supplies us with an instance of religious intolerance, and an example of religious faithfulness. Let us consider these.

I. WE HAVE HERE AN INSTANCE OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE.

The scene of the text is laid in an Eastern land. It would seem that the will of the monarch was supreme.

His word was law ; he must be obeyed. And this authority was not confined simply to affairs of state ; it seems to have entered into the region of religion too. The whim of the king led him to set up a great image, and require all to worship it. From the address of the Jews we conclude that the monarch had the religious faith of his subjects in his keeping.

This is always dangerous. It matters but little when it happens ; trouble is almost sure to arise unless freedom of thought and liberty of conscience are entirely surrendered. It is just as dangerous with a modern pope as with an ancient one. It can make but little difference under what flag it happens. Whether it be a pope of Rome, a king of England, a Romish priest, or an English one who claims the right to dictate a man's religion and rule his soul, it leads to mischief. In all forms the priest, style him as you may, who claims to have property in the souls of men, is dangerous to human freedom, an enemy of liberty of conscience, and in the long run a foe of man.

It was this arrogant claim which kept many states of Europe in the chains of ignorance and superstition far too long. It was this which fired the soul of Luther, and led him to be a reformer. It was this which established the horrible Inquisition, which made such havoc, and which practised such refined cruelties in Spain and elsewhere. It was this which made black and bloody St. Bartholomew in France. It was this which kindled the glowing fires of Smithfield, in which our bravest sons perished, and whose words have stirred us all to be lovers of freedom. It was this which would have laid England at the feet of the Pope, had not our fathers burned the ships of the Armada, and God Almighty Himself sent His storm to sink them.

We state with emphasis that in our judgment no man has ■ right to come between God and the soul. We may help

each other's faith ; we may give assistance to penitent souls who seek our advice and help in hours of conviction and sorrow for sin ; we may carry the consolations of the Gospel of the grace of God to the sick and the dying ; we may tell of the promises of God, of the rest for the faithful, and of the rod and staff which will support the child of God in the valley through which we all must pass. It is a glorious privilege to tell the departing soul that the valley which looks dark is not so, because Jesus Himself will light it by His presence. We may bring comfort and hope to troubled burdened souls by strengthening them in God, as Jonathan did to David in the time of his pain and peril. And all these are blessed privileges which belong to Christians in common. They are not the prerogatives of any special class. Every Christian may do any or all of these things in the name and strength of his Divine Master. But no pope, priest, or king has any right to lock up my soul in his keeping, and put the key in his pocket. He is a pretender who claims the power to send me to hell and lock me up there, and to send my neighbour to heaven if only he be rich enough to pay for prayers enough to have it done. He is an impostor, whether he knows it or not, who puts his confession-box between me and the Cross of Jesus Christ, and claims the power, which belongs only to the atoning blood of the Lamb of God, to cleanse and absolve me from sin. I make no distinctions. It matters not to me whether he be in the Church of Rome, the Church of England, or the Church of the Nonconformists who makes these pretentious claims, I denounce him as a foe to freedom, an enemy of liberty, and one whose claims should be resisted, even at the risk of the burning fiery furnace.

I will here quote and illustrate briefly the four great principles on which religious liberty rests, and which have so often been stated by others.

1. *Every man should be at liberty to worship God according to his own conscience and lights.*

The Eastern king set up his image, before which he intended to prostrate himself in acts of devotion. He had a right to do so if he wished, and believed it right for him. If I should think fit to become a Mahomedan, spread my cloth, and prostrate myself to the earth five times a day in prayers to the great Allah, no one has a right to say I shall not. When Daniel made his prayers in his own house three times a day, with his window opened toward Jerusalem, the home of his fathers, it was wrong to try and prevent him. If I choose to carry on my worship in the stately cathedral, with its chanting choir, surpliced priests, and its centuries of noble history and tradition making it venerable, it should be my privilege to do so. And should I prefer to worship God in the plain unadorned meeting-house of the Society of Friends, who has any right to say I shan't? Every man should be allowed to worship God in that way which is best for him.

2. *The law should protect every man in the enjoyment of this liberty, providing always that he does not interfere with the enjoyment of the same rights and liberties by others.*

This should always be remembered. My freedom of action is to be limited by the rights and liberties of others. The king had a perfect right to set up his image. He was quite right in that. But when he sought to compel others to do as he did he interfered with their liberties, which should have been the measure of his own. Two centuries ago, those who wished to have parish churches and worship in them had a perfect right to their choice. But they violated the principles of religious liberty when they sent soldiers to the church doors to learn who was absent, in order to inflict punishment. When the law flung John Bunyan into Bedford Gaol because he preferred to worship

with the Baptists, the law was wrong ; it ought to have protected him if he and his Baptist friends did not interfere with others. When the Independents were exiled because they would not cease to worship in the Separatist meeting-places, the law was wrong, and ought to have protected them. If the Salvationist of to-day thinks fit to beat his big drum, and to have his music out of the brazen mouths of brass instruments, instead of out of the metal pipes of the organ, he has a right to have all this. But when he beats that drum and blows those brass instruments, as far too long he has done, in front of other places of worship, he touches the liberties of others, and ought to be stopped. The law should protect us all alike in our religion, if we do not interfere with the rights of our neighbours.

3. *No man should suffer civil disability because of his religious belief.*

In England for a long time men did suffer because of their religious faith. No Nonconformist could be member of a town-council, or hold any office under government. In all respects he might be quite as good, or better than many of those in office, but his religion was a bar to him. It is only of recent years that Nonconformists could enter our universities, or bury their own dead in the national graveyards. And even to-day we may not marry our own people in our own places of worship without the presence of a civil officer, who must be paid by us for his enforced attendance. His presence is not required in the parish church. If I am a poor man and wish to be married in the parish church I can have the ceremony performed on the fifteenth day, including the day of notice and the day of marriage. But if I am a poor man and a Nonconformist, and wish to be married in my own chapel, I must give twenty-one days' notice, exclusive of the day of notice and the day of marriage—more than a week longer than my

neighbour. In a state of perfect religious equality there will be no civil disability because of a man's religious belief. A man's religion is an affair between himself and his God, and ought not to exclude him from any office of state.

4. *No man should have preference in civil matters because of his religious profession.*

By the law of England to-day men have preference because of their religious profession. I am a Nonconformist, and am not ashamed of it. No man need be. Our history will bear examination in the light of day. But because I am a Nonconformist I cannot be appointed paid chaplain in any workhouse of the land; I am not eligible as paid chaplain to any of Her Majesty's prisons. If I become a criminal I will be sent to prison; but I am not fit to be sent to prison to try and improve the moral and spiritual life of the prisoners. It matters not how scholarly, pious, devoted, or earnest I may be, the fledgling of a curate, raw and inexperienced, is preferred before me because he is a Churchman.

We are sometimes asked what we mean by religious equality. These four principles will fairly cover our ground. What they represent may not be for a while, but the day is coming. When it comes no king will cast men to the fire because they will not worship his golden image.

II. WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF RELIGIOUS FAITHFULNESS.

"We are not careful to answer thee in this matter," said the Hebrews. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and will deliver us. But if not we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." "Build thy furnace, light its fires, we care

not for these things. Conscience is more to us than life. Burn us if you will—what care we for that?”

You will search long in the records of ancient time before you find a nobler instance of religious faithfulness than this which occurred hundreds of years before our Lord came. The account reads more like a piece of Christian heroism from the days in which the infant Church of God had received the gift of tongues and power at Pentecost than of the dark times of Jewish history. This case suggests two or three things worthy of notice.

1. *We must be true to our God, even if we have to stand alone.*

Living as we do in times when religion is popular, and to attend public worship is respectable, we cannot fully realise all it means to stand alone for God. The young soldier who finds himself in the barrack-room with not a comrade who loves and serves God knows how hard it was alone, on that first night, to kneel at his bedside and thank his God for the mercies of the day. The youth who leaves the godly home for a place in the city remembers how much it cost him to be faithful to the promise he made his mother, and to honour his God in that business house where he found but little sympathy with holy things.

But how much harder when a whole city looks on. How much harder when disobedience to a ruler's command will bring persecution, and perhaps death itself. The power of God's grace and presence have enabled men to do even this. Elijah stood alone at Carmel. Had he failed, certain death would have been his lot. Daniel in Babylon remained true and immovable, though he could hear the roar of the lions which would have opportunity of devouring him. The early disciples and Apostles said we must obey God, and they cared not for stripes, imprisonments, and death. The martyrs of our own land stood firm and true, even in

the midst of the fire, and counted it an honour to have crowns thus won. And shall we be less faithful? Shall we, living in times of greater freedom and blessing, be afraid of honouring our adorable Redeemer? If men point the finger of scorn, what of that? Shall we not, all of us, earnestly pray for the courage, the strength, the grace to dare to stand for God, and alone if need be?

2. *We must be true to our God, even if it makes us seem untrue to men.*

These men had received much in this kingdom. They were the sons of conquered people, men of an alien and foreign race, the children of captivity, and prisoners of war. Royal favour had spared and saved them. By the kindness of the monarch they had been fed, educated, and promoted. And now when they dared to disobey, we need not wonder that the king, himself a stranger to religious conviction, and knowing but little of the true God, raged and was furious.

They had given this king honest and faithful service. They had been true in the offices of state which they held, and like Daniel there was no fault found in them except as to their religion. They had given themselves loyally to the service of the king and his country, but they could not give him their conscience. They could not throw overboard at the bidding of man that which they held sacred for God.

What a lesson is this! How we need to note it! Sad and painful as it may be to appear ungrateful to those to whom we are under obligation, we must not dishonour our God. It is better to lose the friendship of man than the favour of God; better lose our earthly comforts than lose our conscience; better sacrifice our home than part with our honour. The best place should be sacrificed rather than our peace. We need not fear those who can only

kill the body, but we must be faithful to Him who saves both body and soul. "Them that honour Me I will honour."

3. *We must be true to God, even if it brings loss upon us.*

A religion which costs nothing is worth only what it costs. That which costs no effort, no sacrifice, no trouble, is hardly worth the trouble of taking. And yet it is to be feared that there are far too many who have but little idea of making any real sacrifice of time, of substance, of self, or of anything for God and His religion. Their notion of religion is to sit in a lofty and beautiful church which their fathers built, with lovely stained-glass windows, put in by other people's money. They like to hear good and able preaching for which other people pay; and it is their glory to sit with folded arms and sleep away the precious moments in God's house which should be given to real devotion and communion with God. These people seem to imagine that the whole business of the Church and of their religion is just to save their own precious souls, and I doubt if all the religious machinery in the world will succeed in doing it.

There have been men who have talked of the advantage and gain of their religion. But is it not time to alter all this? Is it not time that men should learn that the first duty of a Christian is to honour God, whatever the cost, whatever the sacrifice? Did these Hebrews think of gain? Did Moses consider what he would gain if he made common cause with his own people, whom God meant him to deliver? Nay, he chose to suffer affliction with the people. The great Apostle of the Gentiles gave up all for God when he was saved by Divine grace. If our fathers had considered their own ease, comfort, and gain we could not have had the freedom which is our possession to-day.

Our motto must be, Our God will take care of us—if not, if we must suffer, we will not sacrifice our convictions, we will not dishonour our Lord and God.

It may well be doubted if any one ever suffers much in the long run through faithfulness to God. I could tell of not a few who have actually gained. I once knew a young man who was an earnest godly fellow, who was put to a severe test. He was employed in a warehouse the owner of which was not a man of religious faith, nor even of high moral principle. One day the young man was ordered to set about some correspondence and some business which he knew to be false. He could not do it. He felt that if he did he would be a party to the wickedness. He summoned up courage to speak to his employer about it. In the conversation the young man said, "I have served you faithfully, and will do so in anything which is right. But," said he, "I sometimes preach on Sunday in small chapels, and I feel that I must practise as well as preach." The master was obstinate, vexed, and determined. He said, as he closed the conversation, "If you are not prepared to carry out my instructions, you had better leave my service altogether."

This was a sore trial to him. He had to support a widowed mother. He cared not and feared not for himself, but he did for her. What was to be done? He went to prayer about it. Like Hezekiah of old time, who received an insolent and threatening letter from an opponent, he spread it all out before God. He soon felt what his duty was, and did it. He placed his resignation in the hands of his master, and prepared himself to leave and face the difficulties of getting another berth. Before that godly young fellow had worked out his notice he was engaged for another situation much better than the one he left. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us."

Clearly, I think, we should all learn that whenever duty and interest clash, we must do our duty. If ever God points one way, and the world another, "we must obey God rather than man." The Church to-day as never before needs men and women who shall be noted for their religious faithfulness. Conduct will tell upon men. The world marks well the lives of those who profess to be the servants of the living God. If we should ever forget ourselves and bow down to the golden image and worship it, we not only injure ourselves, but we bring shame and discredit upon the Church, and put our Saviour to an open shame. May He, by His own presence and help, save us from that, and make us bold and true, in all places and in all cases.

The Good Son of a Bad Father.

“Hezekiah the son of Ahaz . . . began to reign. . . . His mother’s name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. . . . And the Lord was with him ; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth.”—2 KINGS xviii. 1-3, 7.

AHAZ, king of Judah, is dead. At his death no tear was shed, except some down-trodden one wept for joy that the king was gone. Destitute of true courage, of piety, of noble or elevating thoughts, he has fallen all covered with shame and irreligion.

It is always an anxious time for a nation when it is changing its monarch. And that anxiety is largely increased after a period of national disaster such as that through which the late king has led the kingdom of Judah, or such as that through which Mary, Queen of England, led our beloved country during her short reign. Now that the king is gone, the troubled, suffering, patient nation turns its eyes toward his son and successor. As he dons the purple, mounts the throne, and takes the sceptre of power and authority, men ask, What will he be like ? Will he tread in the footsteps of his wicked father ? Will he add to our present crushing burdens, or will he seek to ease the people and lessen our full cup of care ? It was indeed a time of anxiety, hope, and wonder. Both the new king and the people claim our sympathy—the people because of their sorrows, the king, because of the difficulties of the position into which he comes.

In the reign of Ahaz, true religion had been suppressed, and the worship of idols put in its place. The house of God had been rifled of its precious vessels, its doors closed, its altars forsaken, and Jerusalem filled with the abominations of a false and degrading idolatry. Disastrous wars, which greatly impoverished the nation, had been undertaken. Tens of thousands of Judah's best men had fallen, and others were carried away into captivity. Taxation was largely increased, and the nation itself sacrificed its independence and became tributary to a foreign foe. Never has Judah been so reduced. Never has any king come to the throne in the midst of such disaster.

At the age of twenty-five Hezekiah, son of the late king, steps into the office of chief ruler. The father was notoriously bad, but thanks to an all-wise Providence he has left behind him one of the best of sons. Full of courage, and hope, and enterprise, he begins his reign. Beginning in the most stormy time of his nation's history, he seized the helm and guided the ship of state through its troubled waters into a peaceful and prosperous haven. He was brave, true, pious, and full of courage. He soon reformed religion, conquered his enemies, brought prosperity to his people, and then passed away amid sorrow as universal as that which England showed when Albert the Good went home to God. No king since the days of Saul did so ill as Ahaz, the bad father; and since the days of David no king did so well as Hezekiah, the good son of the bad father.

This subject is not without its interest and its lessons. Let us consider some.

I. The worst of fathers have sometimes left behind them the best of sons. It was so with Ahaz. But no thanks are due to him. His influence, example, and life were all such as seemed likely to fill the mind of his son with that

which was not good. Yet the son was one of the best of kings, and a good man. Elsewhere we have said something about "like producing like"—"like father, like children," "children are what their parents are." All such judgments are hasty, and savour of the unwise and uninstructed. God can raise up children out of the very stones. He sets aside all our notions of this kind. Saul was a trouble to Israel. He was selfish, disobedient, jealous, wicked. But who ever had a nobler son than he? Search the records of any nation, ancient or modern, and tell me where you find a purer man, a truer friend, or a more devoted and pious man than Jonathan.

I am aware that this age knows more of the science of heredity than any preceding one. But there is no hard necessity laid upon any one in the matter we are now discussing. Moral taints do not always and necessarily pass on with the family estates. And if it be true that some of the noblest fathers have left the feeblest weakling sons, it is also true that some of the worst of fathers leave behind them brave heroic children. Let us learn not to be too hasty in our judgments and in our generalisations lest we make mistakes.

If my words should reach the ear of any whose fathers did not belong to the great and growing company of the godly, do not be discouraged. If you have not had the advantage of a pious ancestry, see to it that your children shall have one. You need not live without God. You need not be as aliens, exiles, or strangers. If your fathers did not lead you through the open door of God's mercy and salvation, they had no power to close the door against you. It is open now. The precious blood of the covenant can cleanse us all. God is no respecter of persons. "He that believeth shall be saved."

II. The sons of bad fathers suffer some loss through paternal wickedness and folly. This does not need much illustration, for, unfortunately, we have too many instances before our eyes almost daily. It is patent to us all that the iniquity of the father is visited upon the children. This is true both in *body, estate, and character*. We suffer for what our parents were and did, and can't help it. I dare say many of you have lived long enough to believe that many of your weaknesses and much of your poverty are the result, not of your own profligacy and extravagance, but of those who have preceded you. Few of you will question the soundness of my conclusions on these two. You may be disposed to do a little when I say that the son suffers in *character* because of the bad father.

I do not refer now to the tendency which we sometimes see, to despise a man whose parents were lowly, poor, or immoral. I have nothing but scorn and contempt for that feeling. My father may be a drunkard, a thief, a murderer, and by the grace and mercy of God I may be none of these. I may be an abstainer, scrupulously honest, and a faithful servant of God. In these respects we must learn to judge of men by what they are. John Bunyan's parents were gipsies, and like too many of that class, were not destitute of vices. But Bunyan was a brave and good and pure saint of God. Martin Luther himself was the child of parents lowly and poor. He is one of the chief figures in Church history, and always will be. Numbers of the past and of the present might be named who are among the best whose parents were not noted for anything in particular. Many of the so-called great houses of the English nobility have their roots not only in poverty, but in immorality too. But the present owners of the family names are not to be despised on that account. We must estimate them for what they themselves are and by what they do.

And yet it is true that the sons of bad parents do suffer. How much I lose in the way of teaching and example and influence if my parents be ungodly, only God Himself can tell. I have been saying that a man is not compelled to be bad because his father is or was, and I do not forget that. And yet there are thousands of people who are what they are largely because of what fathers and mothers were. Let a child be born into a home tainted with impurity, and it is bound to suffer. Take a case or two.

I knew a man who is now a saint in heaven. In his early manhood, and far into the middle of it, he was a man of the world. He was a drunkard, and, according to his own statement to me, lived a bad life. But in the goodness of God he was arrested by the Holy Spirit, converted, and changed, and spent many years in doing good service for his fellows. He had a son who was a drunkard and wild. In conversation with him one day he told me of a little circumstance which was a chief factor in leading to his conversion. His son had been out one night later than usual and had come home very drunk. The father determined to make a stir about it. In the morning when they were assembling at breakfast-table, he rebuked his son most severely for the life he was living. The son sat in silence until the father had finished, then, apparently impressed, he rose up, looked his father in the face, and said with bitterness and sorrow, "Father, why have you not set me a better example?" and walked out of the room.

A better example! Yes, that is it. I know too much of the ways of men and of human nature to attempt to justify every fast youth who can point to his father's weaknesses. But I fear it is but too true that many sons have gone wrong because their fathers did not go right. Only our Father in heaven can tell how much excuse there is for some of the sons who have thus suffered.

I knew another man whose case is to the point. He too is gone. I have heard him say that his drinking habits broke up his little home nine times. He was so reduced that he and his family had all to live in a place at *two-and-sixpence a-week*. When I knew him he was a sober godly man, and was an exceedingly useful man. He led numbers of drunkards to be sober, and to the Cross of his Lord and Saviour. I called upon him one day and found him with his eye discoloured and the flesh black. On inquiring what it meant, he told me a sorrowful story which I can't well forget. His son, his own son, had struck him in the face with his fist! I was greatly shocked, and the good man saw that I was. Said he, "I can't expect anything any better. It is the outcome of my life of sin. When my lads were younger I set them a fearful example, and now I am suffering for it." These words are awful, and the thoughts they suggest are not less so. I would show but little mercy to the man that strikes his father, who is too old and too feeble to defend himself from the blows. But it is a grave and serious question we are now considering. The lad may be almost as deserving of pity as blame. He has suffered through the bad father. In other circumstances, and under other training that lad might have been as good as gold.

All such cases speak loudly to us. You are parents. How are you living? What is the example you are setting your children? Let every father here look into his own heart and exercise his own life. Let him see if his conduct before his children is such as God will approve. It is cruel, it is wicked to inflict such injury upon the children whom God has sent into our homes. Then for your own sake, for your own peace, for your own manhood I call you home to God. And for the children's sake, for the sake of the young immortals whose future life may be made or

marred, good or bad, pure or impure, as you are holy or unholy, I called you to the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

III. In the case of Ahaz, we see how God sometimes sets aside the notions of men and selects from unlikely schools the instruments with which He will accomplish great reforms and bring great blessings. Hezekiah, reared in the house of Ahaz, became a reformer of the abuses of his nation, restored prosperity to it, and brought the people back to the neglected Temple and the all but forgotten God. The son of an idolatrous king, he became the champion of true religion.

Here we get a principle of widest application and illustration. The Bible abounds with it, and our experience too.

The man who was to slay Goliath and remove the reproach from Israel was brought from the sheepfold. When God wanted a great missionary who should plant the standard of the Cross in many new lands, and plant churches in which men should learn the way of salvation by Jesus, He laid His hands on one who hated the very Gospel God wanted preached. Saul on his way to cast men and women into prison was arrested. The bigoted Pharisee became an earnest Christian.

And this is not without its appeal to us gathered here. Some of us it may be have not enjoyed many advantages. Perhaps we are the sons and daughters of parents who were not followers of God. Still God wants us, and has something for us to do. We are not to sit on thrones. We are not to reform a nation. We may not fill a great place. Ours may be a lowlier lot. Still God can use us. If we are His, saved by His love in Jesus Christ, He can make us His special agents in bringing some to know Him. "You can't preach," do you say? What of that! All

good work for God is not done in pulpits by ministers. Down on the plains of daily life we can tell men of the Saviour. In the home we can make plain His love, in the school, the factory, the workshop, and the office, poor and lowly as we may be, God can use us if we will let Him.

IV. Before I close I notice that here we have a lesson of the mother's influence. Did you notice with what care the sacred writer tells us the name of the mother of Hezekiah, and whose daughter she was? "Abi," or Abijah, "the daughter of Zachariah." It is not often you find it so stated in the Scriptures. Are we to conclude that Hezekiah was the good son mainly because he was the son of a good woman? Be that as it may in this case, the mother's influence is unbounded. It begins with the babe, and never ends. Beecher said, "A babe is a mother's anchor. She cannot swing far from her moorings." And, we may add, the babe cannot swing far from its mother. Her heart is its schoolroom. The lessons it learns there are most impressed upon it, and remain longest with it. Says one, "When I was a little boy my mother used to bid me kneel beside her, and place her hand upon my head while she prayed. Ere I was old enough to know her worth she died, and I was left too much to my own guidance. Like others, I was inclined to evil passions, but often felt myself checked, and as it were drawn back, by a soft hand upon my head. When a young man I travelled in foreign lands, and was exposed to many temptations. But when I would have yielded, that same hand was upon my head, and I was saved. I seemed to feel its pressure as in the days of my happy infancy, and sometimes there came with it a solemn voice, saying, 'Do not this great wickedness, my son, nor sin against God.'"

I should like to impress you mothers, if I could, even

more than the fathers, with the importance of living well. If it should happen that any of you have husbands who are not yet on the Lord's side, you always have a place there. A threefold blessing may arise from your love to God. First, your own peace and rest. Second, it may lead to your husband's conversion: the prayers of the wife may save the unbelieving partner. I think I should find it hard to neglect prayer and faith if my wife practised both, and I knew her to be good. Third, it may lead all your children to God. Mothers, God has blessed you with influence, be sure you use it wisely and well.

We are told that heathen mothers never neglect to train their little ones. I have read that she will take her child to the idol temple, and teach it to clasp its little hands before its forehead in reverence, long before it can understand what it is about. As soon as it can walk it is taught to gather a few flowers or fruits and lay them upon the altar before the idol god. It is not permitted to grow up without learning to pray. How is it that so many children in our beloved land grow up without knowing how to pray and destitute of religion? Let us seek to prevent this. Let us resolve that, as God helps us, we will do our best to produce men like Hezekiah, Moses, Samuel, Timothy, and a host of others, who have done much for God.

I do not forget what we said on another occasion—that the best of us may have bad children. Our homes may be bright enough and godly enough, but bad influences in the world may lead our children to neglect the lessons we have taught them, and they wander off; but they will never forget and never quite escape your good influence. A prison chaplain is reported to have told the following remarkable story: A man of fifty, who had been a wanderer almost over the whole earth, and a partaker in almost every sin that can be named, told him that in his

whole life nothing had ever made him feel serious but what his mother said to him just before she died. When she found herself dying she sent for her son, then a lad of twelve. As he approached her she took his hand and spoke to him with maternal tenderness. Telling him she must soon leave him, she earnestly besought him by every consideration so to love the Saviour, and so to take care of his soul as to meet her in heaven. She held his hand until hers was cold and still in death. That man said that, amid the lowest and darkest depths of sin to which he sank, he could never utterly drive from his mind the last words of his mother, and was never able to think of them without solemn emotion.

I must leave all this matter with you parents. I have spoken plain and earnest words. May God impress them upon us all !

The Bad Son of a Good Father.

“Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord.”—2 CHRON. xxviii. 1.

AHAZ is king in Judah, with his chief seat at Jerusalem. He has barely passed his teens ere the purple of the monarch swings from his shoulders, his hand grasps the sceptre of a kingdom, and he finds himself on the throne of his fathers. There have been few kings who mounted thrones under more favourable circumstances than he. It has been the lot of some monarchs to commence their reign in the midst of turbulence, distress, unrest, disorder, rebellion, and debt. Such was the experience of our English Queen Elizabeth, and of many another British sovereign. But Ahaz found he became supreme in the land when the kingdom was rich, strong, and peaceful. His pious father Jotham had ruled well, and left his son an untarnished crown, a peaceful people, and the memory of a good and blessed example. No young man could wish for a better start; but few men have done much worse than did he. Of all the kings who sat on David's throne it would be hard to find one much worse than Ahaz. During his wicked reign the national exchequer was ruined; true religion, the greatest safeguard of this or any nation, was all but banished from the land; the dove of Peace was sent away; thousands of the sons of the people fell on the battle-field; and the king himself, as the result of his sin and folly,

was made a vassal of a foreign ruler. Finally, after sixteen years of misrule, he closed his eyes in the midst of disaster, ruin, and irreligion. He was buried in the city of Jerusalem, but was excluded from the tombs of the kings. His reign shows the mischief which one bad man can do who is intrusted with power.

We have noted that his father was a pious godly king. Ahaz walked not in the ways of that good father, but was a reprobate. We have styled him *the bad son of a good father*. And this is the subject we wish now to consider in the light of God's word and our experience.

I. It is a sorrowful fact that good men are sometimes the fathers of bad sons. I have heard it said that good fathers produce good children. "Like father like son" we have often heard men say. But this is not always so. And we need to be careful in our emphatic statements of this kind, lest, whilst we display our own ignorance, we wound some of the saints of God.

We will not overlook the oft-quoted passage, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." We all rejoice that in the main, and perhaps as a general rule, this is so. But it is a rule with many—far too many—exceptions. Did it ever strike you to examine the family history of the man who is said to have written this text about child-training? Look into it. It will be a revelation to you. It will help to modify the extreme statements of those who are apt to say that when a pious father has a bad child, that father has failed to do his duty. Rehoboam was the foolish young king whose folly and madness rent the kingdom of the Hebrews in twain. It was he who closed his ears against the venerable and experienced counsellors of his father, and listened to the prattle of the juvenile upstarts, who, like

himself, knew but little of the affairs of men. It was he of whom it is said in 2 Chron. xii. 1, that "he forsook the law of the Lord." It was this man's father who is said to have written the words about children's upbringing which we have quoted above.

And is not Ahaz, too, another striking exception to the rule? The chapter before this, from which our text comes, records the good deeds of pious Jotham, who left his kingdom to his wicked son. Alas! we know but too well that piety, virtue, goodness do not always run in the blood. You may pass on the crown, the throne, the kingdom, but the high moral and religious qualities which make a man a king among men do not always go with the crown and sceptre. You may, by the law of the land, make riches, honours, titles, and great names hereditary; but the valour, the courage, the heroism, the true nobility which procured these are often laid away in the family vault. Ahaz stands out in Bible history as a monument of guilt. He is one of the few men of any nation in history of whom not one good thing is recorded. Disregarding God, the Law, and the Prophets, he cared only for his own foolish ways. His life was a polluted and polluting stream. Not one good thought, one virtuous act, or noble deed is recorded of him. He lived in the darkness of sin, and he died as he lived. And this was the son of a pious godly man.

Alas! that we should all know so well that this is by no means an isolated case. In any assembly as large as this the matter must come close home to some. There is many a man here whose heart aches as he thinks of his wild and reckless son. Is there no mother here, with silver in her hair, which age has not put there? Think a moment. Do not you know many of the saints of God whose children are as the sons of Belial? In a Yorkshire town I knew a pious old couple, as good as gold, who were indeed saints,

if any such can be found this side the swelling flood. They had two sons who were confirmed drunkards, and by their lives brought shame and pain to their dear old parents.

Some of you, my friends, have had sorrow and pain as you took to the churchyard the remains of your little ones whom you so much loved. You watched them through days of pain and suffering. Longing to breathe for them and keep them alive, you were helpless and powerless to prevent their little spirits escaping away to join the company of the Heavenly King. They were so lovely, so precious, so sweet, that you seem ill prepared to spare them. You even thought God hard in taking them. But to you I have a word of comfort to speak. I say, Wipe up your tears. You sorrow for them, but your sorrow is not without hope. Your night has bright stars in it. They are not lost; only a little while before have they gone to the better land. Perhaps God knew that our gardens were too exposed for these little tender plants and flowers. It was too cold down here. The frosts and the east winds, which wither and blast, might have killed them. So God, in His unspeakable goodness and mercy, transplanted them to His own garden. There it is always summertime.

“ No chilling winds or poisonous breath
Can reach that healthful shore ;
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more.”

My good friends, I fully sympathise with you in your pain and grief. It has been mine. I have travelled that dark and painful way, and can feel for you and with you as some cannot. But, once more, I venture to say to you, Dry up your tears. Your sorrow is joy compared to the pain, and agony, and grief of the parents whose sons, whose daughters, are such as those of my friends in Yorkshire.

Do I happen to-day to speak to any such son as I have described? Am I speaking in the presence of any bad son of good parents? Is there any one hearing my voice now away from God, and yet the child of praying pious parents? If so, let me urge you to call upon your father's God. Let me urge you to seek, and seek at once, the Saviour whom your mother so faithfully served. That father may long since have gone to the better land. That mother may long ago have become a saint in heaven. But, I beseech you, do not let the prayers of those parents for you remain unanswered.

II. The bad sons of good fathers are often ruined by the sins they allow to deceive them. Read the twenty-third verse of this chapter. It is very instructive. Ahaz, weakened by his questionable ways, and not supported by the power of the God whose worship he had forsaken, fell into the hands of the foreigner. Conquered by the superior forces and better trained men of Damascus, he fondly imagined that they won because their gods, their idols, helped them in battle. Deceived, deluded, blinded by all this, he determined to follow their bad example. He cut to pieces the vessels of the Temple, closed the door of the house of God, and erected idol altars in every corner of Jerusalem. Alas! we are told that "they were the ruin of him." And not only of him, but of others. The sinner seldom, rarely, suffers alone. Others are involved in his fall. "They were the ruin of him and of all Israel."

It would be sad enough if he were the only one blinded and deluded by sin. But unfortunately its victims are all about us. Here is one who sees the merry laugh and hears the jovial song of the enemy of virtue. Thinking it to be real and true, he determines to try it a little. He soon finds himself in what men call the swim. I prefer to call it the

sinking. The wine-cup goes round; the theatre, the dancing-room, the horse-race, and other forms of vice and sin excite and allure. They promise much, but they give little that is real. Before he is aware, many a brave young fellow is blinded and well-nigh lost.

Young men, beware. Sin often wears an attractive form. It often seems so real that even the elect of God may be deceived by it. Pay no heed to the voice of the charmer. It is but the hollow pretence of one who will mock at your after misery. Be not deceived with the false appearance. Like an angel of light the enemy of the soul may come—will come.

If I could tear off the mask of the deceiver you would start back. If I could lift the curtain and let you see the deluded victims of sin, you would shudder. Think of the men with ruined health, bankrupt character, and hopeless outlook, and hesitate lest sin deceive you too, and you become as one of them.

Sin is a dream. And the sons of godly parents, as well as of those who are not godly, fall victims to it. Beware!

III. This chapter teaches that God often chastens the sons of godly parents who fall into sin, and seeks to win them back to Himself. God did not leave Ahaz without warning, reproof, and trouble. Through his long night of sin God often spake to him. He was not allowed to pursue his career of sin without chastening. Sore and sharp were the sorrows which came upon him. He was beaten in war, where he ought to have been successful. He was duped by the people with whom he made alliance. Ultimately he was brought low unto the very dust. His life was a long series of calamities.

God made this man understand that the way of the transgressor is hard. It was hard then; it is hard now

—harder than some think. Go to that hospital and ask that poor fellow what his presence there means. He may say, "The way of the transgressor is hard." Go to that prison which confines so many, and ask them what their presence in it means. They may tell you, "The way of the transgressor is hard." Old father Adam knew something of this when he was turned from Paradise. Cain understood this when as a fugitive he bore his mark. Achan knew this when he and his family perished. Saul experienced this when he lost his kingdom. And so all down to this hour. The ways of sin are not all beds of roses. The path of the wrong-doer often lies over thorns and nettles. The pillow of the sinner is often as hard as was Jacob's when he put a stone beneath his head.

It is a mercy that God does not allow the sinner to go to hell without warning. It is a hard path that leads to it. And the son of godly parents who determines to go to perdition will find the prayers of those parents a huge barrier which he must climb with some difficulty.

It is my own settled belief that God often puts the sinner in the dust to talk to him. I am convinced in my own mind that our loving God deals strangely with some to almost compel them to come to Himself. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. He loves many of the unlovely. Jesus Christ died for the ungodly. The death of Jesus Christ was the expression of God's love to the fallen sinful world. So when I quote the saying that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, I do not simply mean His adopted sons, but also His rebellious children.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray," says one. Good would it have been for Ahaz had his losses, his calamities, his sorrows driven him to God. Well will it be for us if the sorrows and pains through which we pass drive us to the Cross. Perhaps at this hour some of you are smarting.

Your business is not getting on as it should. Is God in it? Perhaps your home has been darkened by the shadow of a great sorrow. Did you ever think that perhaps in all the pain and the darkness God was waiting for your outstretched hand? Happy shall we be if disappointment, if anything will but send us to the open fountain for cleansing and forgiveness in the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is to that God wants and seeks to bring us. It is to that, thank God, we all may still come. It is not too late. We may have trampled the prayers of our parents beneath our feet; we may have set aside their godly example; we may have turned a deaf ear to all entreaties of teachers, preachers, and the calls of God, but the door of mercy and pardon are still open. May the Spirit of the living God help us to enter that door and find rest to our souls, and hope for our lives, and the joy of the Lord as our strength.

The Sword and the Trowel.

“Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.”—NEH. iv. 17.

I REMEMBER once seeing a remarkable picture which rather struck me at the time. I think it was published by one of the missionary societies. If I correctly recall it, there was an ox standing in the forefront of the print. On one side was an altar with its fire burning thereon. On the other side of it was a plough. Three things in all—ox, plough, and altar. Underneath were printed words like these: “Ready for either.” It was meant to suggest that the ox was ready to be yoked to the plough and do honest hard work if required, or, if occasion arose, it was prepared to be slain and sacrificed. What better motto could a missionary society adopt? Ready to do or to bear; ready to serve or to suffer; ready to work or to wait; ready to live or to die—surely that is the true spirit which should mark us all. The requirements of the work, the public good, the welfare of society, the prosperity of the Church, rather than the personal ease and comfort of the individual worker or agent, to be put in the front. This spirit would destroy the passionate selfishness, the struggle for places of honour, and the unprincipled conduct of many, whilst it would lead to untold progress in the Church, in the state, and in all departments of life.

Even a hasty reading of the passage from which our text comes will show that this spirit of self-devotion to

work for the common good marked the men of whom it speaks. Engaged upon the erection of the walls of their city, they met with considerable opposition from some of their neighbours. Their common danger, the necessity of putting up their defences, and the soul-stirring words of their new leader drew them all together in an unbroken alliance, in which no man among them considered either his property, his person, or his labour to be his own. On the forehead of every one of them might have been written the words, "Ready for either"—ready either for "the sword or the trowel;" ready either to work on the wall or to fight the common foe; ready to sound the bugle, to hew wood, or to draw water. "Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

Surely such a stirring incident as this piece of ancient history presents will suggest lessons to the workers in God's cause to-day. Let us take two or three starting-points, and, if we can, stimulate one another to love and good works.

I. THE CHURCH OF GOD HAS STILL A GREAT WORK TO DO FOR THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD.

The walls of many a Jerusalem are down and need building up. Injustice, oppression, and wrong are found in many places. The power of the wicked and greedy sweater, which enables him to grind the face of the poor, needs to be curbed. The victims of intemperance need help and protection. A long and ghastly procession of them marches on with staggering step to tumble into the drunkard's grave every year. The poison tap of intoxicating liquor, which slays more victims than pestilence, must be stopped.

Better provision must be made for the honest poverty

of old age. A Christian nation must not for ever continue to put its worn out industrious old labourers into a factory-like building, badged with the stigma of pauperism, from which many shrink back and die in darkness rather than face. The world must be made to feel that service in the field of industry is as useful as service on the field of battle; that it is as honourable to work in a factory or a field as to dance attendance upon a monarch; that to handle a spade, a plane, or a hammer is, to say the least, as necessary for the wealth of the world as to handle the portfolio of a cabinet minister, or even grasp the sceptre of a kingdom.

The poor must be better housed, and efforts must be made to find work, and therefore bread, for all the toilers. The peace, the safety, the wellbeing of the nation depends upon the contentment of its toilers. A hungry, starving, ill-paid people cannot be, and ought not to be, a contented people. Every year we spend millions of pounds on warships, war implements, and war men. Every year we spend as much on powder to blow into the air, and on metal to send to the bottom of the sea, as could feed I know not how many hungry people. Of course our national security and our national defences must be kept up. But in what do these consist? I do not think that nation quite secure which rests upon bayonets, and swords, and cannons, and warships. And that nation has but a poor defence which trusts entirely to its soldiers, even if every man carries a rifle. That throne is most secure which rests upon the loyal love of a happy and contented people, which has a common-sense occupant, and which has good, wise, prudent, manly, brotherly men behind it. That nation has the best defence whose peoples are industrious, and who are made happy in their industry by a certainty of occupation, a reasonable and proper remuneration, and who have suffi-

cient opportunity of drinking at those springs which make life worth living.

That is the happy nation in which there blend the music of the blacksmith's anvil, the rattle of busy machinery, the song of the honest ploughman, the merry laugh of healthy, well-clad children, and sweet voices of pure and happy maidens.

Then we must get the poor fallen sisters off the city streets. It is not only a disgrace to our nation and a danger to its safety to allow things to exist as they are. We must get all bad men out of high places of power and authority by filling the places with good men and true.

And we must aim at the conversion of the people to God. If the Church stops short of this it fails in its most essential work. The unregenerated heart of man is full of evil. The work of the Church is to lead men to God, to build up waste places, to help the helpless, to protect the poor, to remove injustice and wrong, and bring in the reign of peace and love.

II. HOW IS THE CHURCH TO ACCOMPLISH ALL THIS WORK?

How did the people named in the passage from which our text comes accomplish their work?

1. *In the first place they had a wise and skilful leader.*

In the thick of their work Nehemiah had a great gathering of the people, and addressed wise and brave words to them all. "Be not afraid of them," said he, as he addressed them concerning the difficulty in which they found themselves. "Be not afraid of them." Have a good heart, firm faith, dauntless courage, and a dogged determination to win, and you will. "Be not afraid of them: remember the Lord." Yes, remember Him. You may be weak, and poor, and feeble; you may feel little and insufficient; you may seem but a poor instrumentality; but the Lord is

great and terrible. He is all-powerful, and none can stay His hand. It is said that Alexander the Great was strolling among the tents of his soldiers on the eve of some great battle. Hearing some of his men engaged in conversation in one of the tents he stopped to listen. The men were losing courage and heart, and said so. As they deplored their insufficiency for the task of the morrow, he slipped up to the door of the tent, and, swinging back the canvas, said, "Remember that Alexander is with you." Nehemiah told his people of a greater than Alexander. He was no stranger to the God of Israel. He understood much of His power, His majesty, His might, and so said, "Remember the Lord, which is great and terrible."

Then he went on with his stirring appeal. "Fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

In all aggressive movements there must be aggressive leaders. The success of a party in Parliament often depends on its leaders. If these are weak, the party is weak and demoralised. If the leaders be strong, powerful, great, the party is heard even when the followers are not always numerous. In all movements, I repeat, there must be leaders. In your clubs, organisations, guilds, armies, navies, commerce, you need and must have them.

And the Church of God needs them too. She ought to have the best men, the noblest women. The hosts of the Lord should not be behind the movements of men. And if she is to build up the walls, and save the world, she must have wise and skilful men, full of courage, inspiration, faith, and hope. And, in this respect, I doubt if she has ever been better served since the days of the Apostles than she is to-day.

2. *In the next place all the people were willing to help.*

This narrative is most instructive reading. The en-

thusiasm, and devotion, and willingness of the people passed all praise. The richest and the poorest were willing to share the common toil. The rich did not stand aside, and the poorest were not left out. All suspicion of each other, all distrust, all envy and malice seems to have been forgotten, and, "*every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

If the Church of God is to win the world and usher in the happy millennium, all her sons must help. She has nobles, and rulers, and people, and wealth, and intellect, and skill in abundance. She needs that her people should rally to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The danger in these days is to leave the work to a few, to recognised leaders and officers. This is always foolish; in the Church of God it is fatal.

In all your national matters you need the people. You need them to till your fields, and with their spades and God's sunshine "tickle" the land until it laughs into golden harvests. You need them to fill all your great armies of industry. You may have the best machinery that inspired genius can invent, but you need the people to work and watch it. You may have the best ships you can buy, but without the people they will be laid up and useless. The best officers can do nothing without the people.

But nowhere are the people more needed than in the service of the Church of Christ. She needs all her sons and daughters to assist her in conquering the world for God. She needs them to fill all places of authority and power, to spread the "Light of Life" in every dark place, to make good laws in the House of Commons, to administer the laws without respect of persons, and to build up and make strong the walls of Jerusalem. When all her people help, what abuse can stand against her?

Years ago it was said by a policeman in Manchester that if the Churches of that city were determined, they might soon have all the public-houses of Manchester closed on the Lord's Day. Not only public-houses, but many other houses, and abuses, and sins would go down before the Church if all her people would be willing either to buckle on the sword or use the trowel.

3. *Each one had a work, and did it.*

When I said that all the people helped, you may think that I rendered it unnecessary to say that each had a work, because the greater includes the less. But I want to emphasise this part of my sermon. Each had a work and did it. It is important to notice this. Every man was doing good, useful, necessary work.

There are some in the Church—alas that they should be so many!—who not only do no work, but are a curse to many of those who do. They stand and look on while others toil, and all they seem willing to do is to find fault. This is a poor occupation. It is a business in which any simpleton can set up. It does not require much stock-in-trade. Put a hammer into the hand of a madman, and he will soon demolish the most beautiful statuary which the genius of the past ages has produced. It will take a man of skill and patience to reproduce anything like it. A mischievous boy with his shilling pocket-knife can destroy the canvas which is all ablaze with the colours of the noblest artist. It will require a man of power and great skill to reproduce anything like it. Fault-finding is a bad business, and the sooner we all get out of it the better it will be for all of us.

God has a piece of work for each one of us to do. There is a bit of wall building for every man. Let us try to find out what our bit of work is, and then set to and do it. Some of us have to stand in front and try to lead the way.

Others have to stand in the rear. Some work in the blaze of day, and others work out of sight. But whether we are in front or at the rear, it is important that we work well. I sometimes admire the bridges which cross the river Thames. As I have sailed under them I have thought about the divers who had to work below the surface of the water to lay the foundation of some of the strong work which carries the weight of the whole. The work which those divers did out of sight was all-important. If they had done it badly the whole would have suffered in consequence. It may be so with our work. The bit of building assigned to each one of us may seem of small consequence, but if it be our God-given task, it is really important. All work for Him is important.

What is your work? Do you know it? Are you doing it? If so, all will be well.

4. *They did their work in dependence upon God.*

Though the work they did would be called secular work, they did it in a religious spirit. To them it was holy work. To God they made their prayers, in God they placed their confidence, and to Him they looked for strength and help.

The Church of to-day needs and has God's presence. And if she is to fulfil her great mission, and gather the peoples within her folds, she must go to all her work in the strength of the Lord. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

The activities of the Church of to-day are many and varied. She is devoting herself more largely than ever to the social side of life. It is well that she should do this. But back of all this the Church must have power from God. She is nothing without the living presence of the Spirit of God. If God be with her, guiding, controlling, blessing her, she will continue her victorious march until "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ." God speed the day.

All at Work.

“So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the sodering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.”—ISA. xli. 7.

THIS text is full of action. We hear the swish of the carpenter's plane, see the movements of the goldsmith, and listen to the music of the blacksmith's anvil. And above the noise of the workmen's tools we hear the workers' voices. What are the words we hear? Strife? jealousy? envy? The carpenter is speaking words of encouragement to the goldsmith as he does his work; while the founder cheers on the blacksmith, and says of the sodering, it is very good.

And what was the occasion of all this movement and encouragement? This is not easy to determine. But it would seem as if war had been made upon idolatry, and its false gods destroyed. Instead of forsaking their false religions, these adherents of superstition set to work with a will to restore, replace, and strengthen their gods and their temples.

Thinking of the activities of these pagans and heathen on behalf of their systems, John Foster says, “What the inhabitants of this planet, between willingness and compulsion, have done, in labour and cost, for false religions, is an amazing spectacle for contemplation.” It is indeed an amazing spectacle. Though many of their great temples are now in ruins, these are of such magnitude as to fill

the beholder with wonder. At Ephesus I have wandered among broken marbles, where once stood the great temple of Diana, whose followers were roused to madness against Paul and his companions when they fancied their craft to be in danger. In Egypt I stood in wonder and bewilderment among the gigantic ruins of its once famous temples. In the city of Rome, the once proud mistress of the world, I have seen the broken ruins of its ancient temples, which are imposing now even in their ruined condition. At Athens, the once famous centre of the wisdom of the world, I have spent days in silent wonder and awe as I gazed upon its wealth of marbles, and columns, and temples. These, and multitudes of others, bear witness to the generosity of the ancient heathen and pagan world. They stand as speaking examples to the Christian nations of the earth, and seem to urge them on to a like generosity in support of their higher, nobler, and more enduring religion of Christ.

Dr. Talmage says, "When I read this passage I wondered why it was that in the kingdom of God we could not be just as well banded together; why, since there is work for every Christian man to do, we could not all be encouraging each other; I encouraging you by the way I do my work, and you encouraging me by the way in which you do your work; and so, in a spiritual and Christian sense, 'the carpenter encouraging the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smites the anvil.'"

It is in this sense that I propose to deal with the subject. For if these ancient men encouraged each other in work which we should not consider good, the good spirit in which they did that work may well be copied by Christian men. And when I find my Saviour teaching good lessons from the bad conduct of the unjust steward, I am warranted in noticing the unity, the activity, the zeal, and the co-operation of these ancient heathen.

I. IN THE FIRST PLACE, LET US NOTICE THAT THEY WERE ALL AT WORK.

They were all at work. Carpenters, goldsmiths, hammermen, blacksmiths, and soderers. No idle hands. No unemployed. No hangers-on. All busy. Each doing his share. Their activity was admirable and commendable.

Many of us like activity. We are young and strong, and delight in the busy movements of our times. We rejoice to hear of the activities of commercial life, and watch with interest the life, and vigour, and go which business men now put into their work. The slow motions of the old times, when the stage-coach, the pack-horse, and the slow-sailing vessel were the only modes of travel, did well enough in those distant days, which our grandfathers have spoken of as the "good old times." But they will not do for these. If some of the London merchants of the last century could come back to this city and see the life and go of the commerce of these days, they would gaze upon it all in wonder and amazement.

Then in the intellectual world all is life and go. We take nothing for granted now. The last half century has been marked by, and will be remembered as, a time of great intellectual life.

In the political world it is the same. Never was there a period in our history more throbbing with political life and action than the days in which we live. We are all politicians in some way. We are all interested in the government. It is indeed, as never before, a time of government for the people. In every direction there is life and motion. "Rest and be thankful" belongs to other days—it gets no welcome in these. Carpenter, goldsmith, blacksmith, soderer, hammerman, all are at work.

It should be just like that in the Church of Jesus Christ, only more so. Of all organisations in the world the

Christian Church should be the most active, the most full of life and work. Here, stagnation means death. Here there should be no idlers, no unemployed, no hangers on. I have heard it said in the political world that it should be one man, one vote. I have heard a labour leader say, "One man, one job." Of the Church of Christ I would say a work for every man, and every man at his work.

When Nehemiah was building up the walls of ancient Jerusalem, he found himself with a stiff piece of work on hand. The difficulties of his task did not arise from the work itself so much as from the outside opposition he had to face. But he organised his forces. Every man had a bit of work to do. The rich were not left out, and the poor were included. Every man had his task and did it. It should be so in the Church to-day. I do not see that it has room for those who wish to sit at ease in Zion. And yet I fear there are many of them within its courts. May the day soon come when all shall be at work. I may not live to see the dawn of the day when the Church of the living God shall be filled with living active men, I may not have the joy of witnessing this millennium blessing, but it must, it shall come. It makes one's heart dance with joy only to think of this good time coming. The Church of Christ all aglow with life! "No room for men with folded arms, who lounge in richly upholstered pews, and doze away the precious hours of worship, in which strength should be gained for renewed activities," will then be inscribed upon its portals. It will say to those who wish to be coddled, and nursed, and wheeled in perambulators, you cannot enter here. All who pass these portals must be live men. The carpenter, the goldsmith, the blacksmith, and all the rest of the goodly fellowship of the apostles are at work, and will receive no drones into their busy hive.

How does all this bear upon ourselves here as a Church

and a people? How does it strike us? Are we hit sadly by any of the words which I have spoken? I fear we must plead guilty. Alas! we are not all Christian professors to begin with. I wish we were. And of those of us who are the Lord's, there are many of us who find the struggle for daily bread for ourselves and our families so great, that we seem to have but little time for good work for God and the world. Still we are big enough and strong enough to do much more than we have done. I want to see this Church active and full of life—every man at work. If all of us who are members were doing what we ought to do, our influence would soon be much more felt than it is.

II. IN THE SECOND PLACE, LET US NOTICE THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THEY GAVE EACH OTHER.

“The carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheneth with the hammer him that smote the anvil.”

Men will work, and work well, when their efforts are appreciated. It is not work which kills men so much as worry, and the absence of encouraging words. A few words of encouragement wisely spoken are as helpful and soothing to the toilers as medicine to the sick or ointment to a wound. Even the dumb animals which have become the companion and worker for man seem to understand encouragement, and will, in many ways, show their appreciation of it.

And yet there are multitudes of discouraging men—men who fall out of sympathy with the times in which they live, and can do but little else than check, discourage, and put on the brake in connection with all movements with which they are identified. They are found everywhere—in commerce, in politics, in social movements, and in Church life and work.

I know the name of a firm of manufacturers which had a great business. But in its methods it did not move with the times. The younger members of the firm were alive to the requirements of the day, and were for keeping ahead of them. But the wise seniors could not be moved. Their goods had met the needs of the past, and were still as valuable as ever. If the public were not content with things as they were, well, then, the public must go elsewhere. And it did begin to look elsewhere. There was push enough, skill enough, and ability enough in the younger members to keep pace with the times, if only they could have a few encouraging words.

The same thing occurs in public life. You may give your life to the service of your country, and but few will speak words of encouragement to you. Men will watch your words and actions with a keen eye for the smallest defect. They will pursue you with relentless criticism if you do not fit your notions into theirs, and will belch forth upon you volcanoes of abuse. For illustration of this you need only take up the daily papers and study them for a little while. When the Reds are in office, the Whites heap upon them all their abuse. And when the Reds come out and the Whites go in, then the Reds have torrents of abuse for the Whites.

I have been an observer of political movements and political leaders for more years than I care to name. Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield occupied prominent positions in their respective parties during most of those years. I have been trying to think how often Lord Beaconsfield encouraged Mr. Gladstone, and how often Mr. Gladstone encouraged Lord Beaconsfield. The occasions are few in number and far between. The occasions on which they stood opposed to each other were almost as numerous as the public events in which they took part. And yet both

these men in their respective parties, like Saul in Israel, stood head and shoulders above their fellows. Both were men devoted to the good of their country. Both were men who, through all their public life, were devoted to the public good. Both were truly great men. And surely both often said and did things which deserved the word of encouragement each from the other.

It is surprising, too, what discouragement is often met with in the Church of Christ. If we here at Queen's Park are a united, happy brotherhood, and live in each other's affections, it is not so everywhere. If the carpenter here encourages the goldsmith and the rest of the workers, it is not so in all churches. I most heartily wish it were. In the Church of God more than elsewhere men should encourage each other. There are the deacons, whose duty it is to care for the people, to visit the sick, and be helpers to the pastor. Make it your duty to encourage them. Remember them when you approach the throne of grace. You often pray for your pastor. There are but few churches whose members forget to seek God's blessing upon the minister. The deacons need your prayers too. Then there are the teachers in the Sunday-school, men and women who are trying to lead the children to know Jesus Christ as their best friend. Their work is often hard and trying. Encourage them. Need I stop to speak of mission workers, district visitors, and the multitude of self-denying devoted saints who are toiling in Christ's vineyard. Let the carpenter encourage the goldsmith, and he that smoothes with the hammer him that smites the anvil.

If we take a larger outlook upon the Church and the world, there is much that encourages the followers of Jesus Christ. I know there are pessimists who think we are all wrong in our methods in these days. They look

with horror upon the socialistic movements to which the Church has largely committed itself in these days, and almost think some of us past praying for. And yet I see much to make us glad, and give us encouragement. The influence of the teaching of the universal Church of the Redeemer is to be seen in most of the great movements of the day. The efforts to secure better dwellings for the poor; better education for the children; limiting the hours of child labour, and lengthening the school age; lessening the hours of labour, and efforts to secure for the toiler a larger share of the fruits of his labour—these are all the outcome of the work of the Church of Christ. Nor is this list by any means exhaustive. We might speak of the improved character of all our governing bodies, and the desire there is to exclude bad men from all places of power; of the earnest desire everywhere felt to lessen, to limit—if not entirely to stop—the sale of intoxicating liquor; and here, too, I shall claim encouragement for the Christ workers.

But there is one other encouraging feature to which I must refer. I can remember the time when it was believed that the great masses of working people outside our churches were alien to the religion of Christ, if not actual infidels. But no one with knowledge of the facts would say that now. All through the land the working classes have been touched by the influence of Jesus Christ. To-day, as never before, Christ is loved and followed by the people who are seeking and find rest and hope in Him. Everywhere we hear of forward movements, early morning schools, and pleasant Sunday afternoons. Everywhere the fields are white unto harvest for Jesus Christ. And all who have worked and are working for Him, may well encourage one another as did these ancient carpenters, goldsmiths, and blacksmiths.

III. IN THE THIRD PLACE, LET US NOTICE THE QUALITY OF THEIR WORK.

"It was fastened with nails, and could not be moved." Work done under the circumstances of the text was sure to be good. It could not well be otherwise.

I am speaking to many of you who are engaged in good work. Here and elsewhere you spend a good deal of your time for the benefit of others. In day-schools, mission districts, clubs, trades' societies, and in other ways you are called to render service for your fellows, and for your good God. Let me urge you with all the earnestness I can to do your work well. Do not catch the spirit of the age. This is the day of the jerry-builder. Quantity is often considered rather than quality. Outward show is the order of the day. In London we have an iniquitous system of short leases for one hundred years or less—a system which, like many other things, is doomed to die. This short lease system induces cheap, common, jerry-building. But, my friends, many of you in your little way are engaged upon work which I may describe as an everlasting leasehold. You seek to influence men for time and eternity. Therefore do good work—work which will stand the test of time, and win the approval of God.

But before closing, let me add a few sentences more. It is important for us all to remember that what we can do for God depends upon what we are before God. We can only teach what we know. If we are not taught of God, we can't teach others about God. If we do not know the joy of the Christian Redemption, we cannot make others know it. If we are not filled with the light of God, not much of it can shine out through us. If we would do good work for God, we must let God work in us to will and do of His good pleasure. He can use the feeblest

instrumentalities. May He use many of us who are here. May the carpenters—of whom there are many in this Church—and the goldsmiths, and all the rest, know the blessings of peace with God, and come to understand more fully the glory of Christian service.

The Church and the Labour Problem.

“Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore : let them go and gather straw for themselves,” &c., &c.—
EXOD. v. 7.

THIS chapter, which I have just read, carries us at once into the midst of a labour difficulty. And though the case is three thousand years old, it is worth more than a passing glance; and will repay a more prolonged study than we can now give to it. An ancient, numerous, and industrious people have come to be the toilers, the serfs, if not the slaves, of the Egyptians. The strong nation they served, taking advantage of the weakness of the Hebrews, has adopted many expedients for keeping the people in a state of bondage. Their male children have been destroyed, their tasks have been made heavy, and their opportunities for rest and worship but few and poor. Indeed, so bad is their case, that we are told, in the language of Scripture, that “they sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning . . . and God had respect unto them.”

In the providence of God, one of the children of this oppressed people was destined to be the saviour of his suffering countrymen. The wicked law which consigned the child to death, was evaded by the wit and love of his mother, and he was not only kept alive, but was trained and educated at the expense of the nation out of which he was to lead his own people. It happened then, as it

has often happened since, that the oppressor forged and sharpened the very sword which was to drip with his own blood. It was Goliath's sword with which David took off the giant's head. This fifth chapter of Exodus finds the great leader in the presence of the king Pharaoh, in God's name saying, let my people go.

Hence you see, men, when I come to-day to discuss with you the Church and Labour Problem, I am not only dealing with a question which is popular now, but which in varying forms is as about as old as recorded history.

Here and now, I desire to think of it as a moral and spiritual question, for it seems clear to me that the Church of Christ should not deal with either the Labour Problem, or any other problem, in a political party sense. Regardless of all parties, the Church should give its influence to all moral and spiritual movements which need help, from whatever source the appeal may come.

It would greatly help us all who are in the Church, and desire its strength to be used in favour of equal righteousness, if we had a clear statement of what is meant by the Labour Problem. The labour leaders of to-day are among the most intelligent that any class of men need wish to have. Many of them are in the Church, and all of them, so far as I know, are above suspicion as to their own private life and character.

Now, I have noticed, and you have noticed, that more than one of these leaders has said hard things of the Church of Christ and its leaders. I venture to make a suggestion to the labour leaders, or such of them as my words may reach. And it is simply this: That instead of hurling hard words against the Church, they should state clearly what their grievances are, and point out in what reasonable and righteous way the Church can help to remove them. If they will do this, I make no doubt that their statements

will have careful and prayerful consideration. All the churches are anxious to help and be just to the poor, whilst not being unjust to any. I believe the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishop of London, and the Congregationalists are all at this moment anxious to come face to face with those who are authorised to speak on behalf of labour.

Meanwhile there are two things of which I may speak as the work of the Church in part solution of the Labour Problem. It should work seriously toward changing the environment of the labourer, and for the conversion of the man.

I. THE CHURCH SHOULD SEEK TO IMPROVE THE LABOURER'S SURROUNDINGS.

We are all agreed that the poor should be better housed than they have been. For years I have been saying that it is a shame and a disgrace that many of our poor people should be compelled to herd together in places far worse than the stables in which some of my rich friends keep their horses. My objection does not lie against the stables for the horses, but the hovels for the people.

Then, too, we are all beginning to feel that somehow the conditions of labour must be so altered that the honest worker shall not live in constant fear of starvation. At the conclusion of an address at some meeting recently held, a man rose to speak, and said: "We workers complain that whilst many of us are able and willing to work, we have often to beg for the privilege of being allowed to do so." Not only that, but the difficulty of finding employment when it is lost keeps men in a state of unrest and anxiety which is not good. The introduction of machinery into almost all manufactures has led to the dividing up of the work into sections, and to the massing of large numbers

in some centres of industry which have become special for certain classes of goods. Those work-people are tied to those districts, and unless they have wisdom to form powerful trades' unions, they must be more and more at the mercy of those who employ them. Dismissal sometimes means ruin.

I strongly advise all workers to form unions where these do not already exist; and where there are unions, I would urge the toilers to join them at once. In union they will find strength. The lessons which the past teaches are that it is only as labour makes itself strong that it can hope, with the help of its friends, to secure its just recognition.

I think the time has come when the Church should say to all men, that labour must have a larger share of its produce than has hitherto fallen to its lot. Far too often the toiler produces harvests which others enjoy. His lot is one of continuous work, with little hope and relief, and often the honest old labourer drops at last into a parish coffin and a pauper's grave. I cannot believe that this is as our Saviour wills it. Nor can I believe that an awakened, enlightened, living Church will for ever allow this to continue.

Better provision must be made for the honest poverty of old age. A nation of churches must not continue to put its worn-out old labourers into factory-like workhouses, badged with the number and dress of the parish, shamed by the stigma of pauperism from which many shrink and die in darkness and despair rather than face. Men must be made to feel that service in the field of industry is as useful as service on the battle-field; that it is as honourable to work in a factory as to serve a queen; that to handle a spade, or a plane, or a hammer, is, to say the least, as necessary for the wealth of the world, as to handle the

portfolio of a Cabinet Minister, or even grasp the sceptre of a kingdom.

The victims of intemperance need help and protection. A long and ghastly procession of them marches on with staggering step to tumble into the drunkard's grave every year. The poison tap of intemperance, which slays more victims than pestilence, must be stopped. Labour itself, through its leaders, calls loudly for help here. The President of the recent labour congress said, "There are twin evils to be got rid of—poverty and drink." Some of my temperance friends will say that if you rid us of the drink, you will strike a death-blow at poverty, for they believe that the one could not exist but for the other.

The peace, the safety, the prosperity of a nation depends upon the contentment and good-will of its toilers. A hungry, starving, ill-paid, badly-housed people, cannot, and ought not to be a contented people. If these things exist, and the labour leaders tell us they do, then the matter is urgent, and should have attention. It will not do to turn a deaf ear, and drive discontent beneath the surface. I do not think that nation as secure as it ought to be which rests upon the bayonets of its soldiers, its guns and warships. That throne is most secure which rests upon the loyal love of a happy and contented people, which has a wise and kind occupant, and which has prudent, manly, brotherly men behind it. That is the truly happy country whose peoples are well employed, housed and fed; whose toilers have rest and leisure sufficient to enable them to drink at those springs which make life better worth the living; and in which men and women and children are enabled to enjoy this life as a heaven on earth, as they prepare by honest deeds and noble service for the heaven which is to come.

You may ask me very properly how is all this to be

done? How are we to bring in this happy and blessed millennium? It is much easier to ask than answer. No one man can fully answer it. All we can do is to give the result of our thinking. I am sure it will not be done by setting the poor against the rich, as if the rich were the enemies of the poor. It will not be done by making the toilers believe that their employers are all thieves and robbers, who fatten upon the labour of the workers—great sharks who swallow up the smaller fry. This is the lowest depth of folly. He who sets class against class, man against man, labour against capital, is the friend of neither, but the common foe of both. He is as much the enemy of the one as of the other. He is the friend of neither, and does not deserve the confidence of either. Help must come by way of union, and not in separation. And I very much doubt if it will be done by setting up separate labour churches, into which men seek to gather the toilers, and exclude all others. Such a course will only prolong the hated class distinctions which have so long cursed the world, and which should not be allowed in the House of God. I rejoice, as all good men must rejoice, that the great masses of the workers recognise God and religion in any way. It used to be said that they were alien to religion, if not Atheists. No one with any knowledge of the facts will say that now. One of the most hopeful signs of the times is the undeniable fact that Jesus Christ has laid hold of the heads and hearts of large numbers of our industrial classes. But I cannot help the feeling that it is a pity to carry our class distinctions into our religious life. In all my public life I have been teaching that, once we pass the gates of God's House to join in public worship, we should forget our social differences, and bow together as brothers and sisters before the "All Father." In the world we cannot help our social dif-

ferences—there is no remedy for it. But in Jesus Christ there should be neither rich nor poor, master nor man, mistress nor maid, but all one in Him.

The Church owes it to the labourer, however, to see that his surroundings are such as should be in a Christian land. It is the business of the Church to talk to Parliament as well as to local authorities, and see that every unclean thing is swept away. And the first thing necessary to secure this is to sweep away all unclean men from the seat of authority and power. The Church can do much by sending its sons into the high places of power and authority. I once said somewhere that, upon the whole, it is better for us to have good men administering bad laws, than to have bad men deal with good laws. But the Church should see that good men are sent to that place where bad laws can be wiped out, and good ones brought in.

Recently, in the town of Bradford, in Yorkshire, all the Churches united for a general visitation of the town to invite the people to attend some place of worship. That was excellent work; I wish more of it could be done. In the town of Halifax, also in Yorkshire, many of the Churches recently formed a union to secure the election to the Town Council of men of character, who will use their authority in favour of the people. This latter was as necessary and as godly a work as the former. And it is to this latter kind of work that the Church much needs to put its hand a little more. The Church deplores the sin, the wretchedness, the poverty, and the misery of men. It is shocked at the irreligion which prevails. Let it wake up, and use its power to remove all that causes this irreligion and this sin. Let it do what it can in every honest way for the betterment of the people, and God will approve, whatever men may say.

II. THE CHURCH SHOULD SEEK THE CONVERSION OF THE LABOURER.

Many people will say, indeed have said, that the solution of the whole difficulty lies in the conversion of the man. Lift up the man and you will soon see his surroundings lifted. If I say there is a good deal of truth in this, I say it because I see it in a way totally different from that in which some men see it. A converted, sober, educated workman will *compel you*, sooner or later, to do justly by him. Ignorance, immorality, drunkenness are the worst foes of the people. They are the best and surest helpers of the sweater and the oppressor. Religion, sobriety, and education will enable men who have votes in their hands to compel even the parliament of England to observe the principles of that equal righteousness taught by Jesus Christ. John Burns knows this well enough, and meant it much as I do when, at the recent Dockers' Congress in South Wales, he used these wise and sober words, "If labour is to conquer its enemies, it must subdue itself." I quite believe the solution of the difficulty lies in the conversion of the man.

How are we to accomplish that desirable end? If we are to win the labourers for the Church of the living God, we must believe, and show that we believe, that they are our brothers and sisters.

They are the children of God as much as any of us. They are redeemed by Christ and belong to Him. They are destined for immortal glory. They may not know it. In their ignorance of God and in their folly they may wander far from Him, and turn their backs upon all our Churches; but they are still His children, made in His image and likeness—our brothers and sisters. And if they are lost for a while, it is our business to bring them back home to our Saviour and theirs.

"I know no aspect of the Labour question," said a writer in the *Independent*, "so important as this—the labourer's personal relation to God by Jesus Christ." God has honoured some of us by making us His ambassadors. He has given us the glorious privilege of Christian service, but with it the responsibility of seeking God's lost children, our wandering brothers and sisters. Our supreme duty to them is to lead them to a living loving Christ, who died to save them from their sin. We are to introduce them to the joys of the Christian redemption, to the blessing of reconciliation to God, and the unspeakable glory of that immortal life which Jesus Christ kindles in the heart of every believer. We are to tell them that Jesus Christ has opened for all men, without respect of persons, the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of Liberty, Equality, and Human Brotherhood.

Have we always done this? Has the Church always been faithful in its treatment of the toilers? Have our rich laymen, our rich seat-holders, have any of us always made the people feel that we regarded them as brothers? I once heard a story which is full of biting sarcasm. A tramp called upon a minister—to beg. The clergyman took him a piece of dry bread into the kitchen, but before giving it to the tramp, said he would like to pray with him. "I can't pray," said the tramp. "Never mind that—kneel down and I will teach you," said the good man of God. "Say after me 'Our Father.' " The tramp was silent. "Our Father," repeated the clergyman. The tramp was silent. Opening his eyes, the minister said, "Why don't you go on?" "I don't know what our Father means," said the man. "It means that we are praying to the great God who made us all—our Father who lives in heaven." "Is He your Father?" asked the tramp. "Yes." "And is He my Father, too?" said the man. "Yes." "Then you

and I are brothers," said the beggar. "Yes," said the clergyman, with some hesitation. The tramp instantly rose from his knees, seized the bread, and, holding it towards the astonished clergyman, said, "How can you find it in your heart to give your own brother a dry hard crust like this?"

I fear that the Church has often given its toiling brother the dry hard crust. Men have driven to church behind costly prancing horses, and cared but little for men who had not boots in which to walk there. We have sat in richly upholstered pews, with the light of heaven flowing in upon us through richly stained glass windows, and have not been troubled to see houses of the poor with brown paper in place of glass. We have said "Amen" to prayers on behalf of the poor, but have not lifted a finger to help and save the poverty-stricken, who were rotting in their want not three squares away. I thank God for the dawn of a better day. I close by quoting a sentence from the *Independent*: "We are now realising that what the working-man wants most is what man universally wants most—to be at one with God; to be free from the burden of past guilt, and from the slavery of evil habit; to know the delight of serving Christ; to realise the full franchise of the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

If the Church of the living God will rise in its strength, assert its power, and use its influence in aid of the sons of toil, they will rise up and call it blessed, and will say, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Gideon's Call to Service.

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

—JUDG. vi. 12, 13.

MOST of you have read or heard of the Corn Laws in England. In consequence of their operation bread was exceedingly high in price, and the sufferings of the poor were hard and terrible. There are people living now who can recollect the sad condition of the people, and how hard it was for the toiling classes to keep body and soul together.

This ancient history from which I have taken my text carries us back to a period when God's Israel was in poverty and want. It was not the action of laws passed in the interests of landowners which led to their misery; it came through the oppression of a foreign foe, whose merciless treatment of the people scarcely left them the means of life. The Midianites had conquered Israel and exacted from them the last possible farthing. And it so happened that when Israel tilled its fields, their oppressors stepped in and took the harvest. Israel served, but when the people should have reaped the fruits of their toil, their enemies came swooping down upon their fields, encamped with their cattle, and ate up the food of the people of the land. The only way in which they could at all get along seems to have been by hiding such food as they could get.

Indeed, such was their desolate condition that they lived in dens, and caves, and among the rocks, and were afraid to say that even their lives were their own. The text finds God's people in poverty, destitution, want, fear, insecurity, and servitude.

The question arises, and quite naturally, how came all this about? If these people are the descendants of those men among whom Joshua divided the fair and fruitful fields and gardens of Palestine, how comes it that now they are in such sad condition? Did not God promise to be with them? Was it not He who gave their fathers possession of the land, and drove out their enemies? Had He not chosen them as His own, His peculiar people? Why then do they hide in dens and caves, and go in fear and dread all their days? Why are they now so feeble and poor? The opening verse of this sixth chapter gives us the answer, and supplies the key of the whole position. "The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord." Yes, that is it. They did evil. It is the old, old story—*SIN*. It is as old as Adam, and as new as the age in which we live.

"They did evil in the sight of the Lord" may be written across the history of most suffering and sadness. Wrong-doing, disobedience, sin—here we get the answer. This is the tap-root of much of our suffering and inconvenience. This is the poison which destroys our life. This is the prolific parent of the ills which afflict us to-day. This people were down in the dust when they might have been walking erect. They were in poverty when they might have had plenty. They were in bondage when they might have been free. They were living in sin when they ought to have been walking in the light. As it was then so it is now. This old book is wonderful in its truthful picturing of human nature. It is old, yet ever new. Its men and its women all lived in

ages long past. And yet how modern much of the account seems. Stript of its quaint language, the Bible is the most true and modern of books. Isn't it true to-day that many men are down who ought to be up, and who were meant by God to be up? Isn't it true to-day that vast numbers of us live in the dark when we might walk in the light of God? Isn't it true that thousands of men, like these ancient Israelites, have scarcely bread, who ought to have plenty, and would have but for sin? Isn't it true that there are numbers of homes full of all that makes for pain, which ought to be filled with the sunshine of heaven? Isn't it true that there are scores of Christian churches cold, formal, almost dead, which ought to be active, vigorous, and all aglow with life?

Our text finds this ancient people when the time of their deliverance was at hand. The hour was about to strike. God sent His messenger to call a man to deliver the people. And it is the call of this man Gideon we are now to consider. We may notice four things in connection with it—

I. THE TEXT SAYS IT WAS AN ANGEL WHICH CAME TO CALL GIDEON.

Who and what this angel was who appeared unto Gideon would form an interesting study. It would lead us far beyond our time to attempt it now. There are three points which we will notice—

1. *The words used in the text are "The Angel of the Lord."*

That is the Angel of Jehovah—the Lord Himself. In the 14th verse these words are used: "And the Lord looked upon him." Are we then to conclude that this was the same Lord who afterwards came as the Christ of Nazareth? The same who now comes to us by His Spirit. There are many passages which describe the appearance of angels which seem to point to God Himself.

2. *Most of the Old Testament saints had the honour of visits from angels.*

In some form or another the Bible is filled with angelic appearance—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, and many others. We have not time now even to name them.

3. *Do angels appear to men now?*

Most of us have asked this question, and most of us have thought about it. Did God keep all the special manifestations of Himself and His will for the old world men? Has He withdrawn all angelic messengers and ministries from the world of to-day? Does there never an angel face look in at our window? Is there never an angel form to enter our doors?

That in the old form they do not come to us is quite certain. In the infancy of religion, when men needed object-lessons more than now, it was perhaps necessary that God should give men something to look at. But in these later times of the fulness of the Spirit, perhaps we do not need them in the old form. But that the world is full of ministering angels I make no doubt. We are meeting them every day. We are surrounded by them on all sides. But we are so slow and dull, so hard of belief, and so hurried that we have hardly time to notice God's angels, or think about them until they leave us.

I know a man who has led hundreds of men to sign the temperance pledge, and has brought not a few to Jesus Christ. He was once a poor reeling drunkard, living in a poor and desolate home. As he came home one night he found his wife on her knees praying for him. *Praying for him!* Laying her hands upon him, she gently brought him to his knees, and then she prayed for him. That was the turning-point. Wasn't that woman the angel of God, the Divine messenger to lead him back home to God?

I know a man who is now a missionary, engaged every

day among the people, and rendering an amount of useful service to his fellows the good of which can hardly be estimated. And what of him? He, too, was once a drunkard. One day, years ago, he was wending his way home with one of his children at his side. It was a girl. With her hand in his they trudged along together. Suddenly she stopped him in the street, and looked straight up into his face with her two earnestly little eyes, and she said, "You won't get drunk any more, will you, daddy?" It touched his heart. It led him to sobriety and to God. He never did get drunk again. Wasn't that child God's ministering angel? Is there anywhere in the Old Testament, or out of it, any clearer case of a God-sent angel to any man? To be sure the language in which I write it is very different from that used by the writers, compilers, and editors of our Bible. But the angel-messenger was there all the same. I pity the man, and he needs pity, to whom no angel of God ever comes.

II. NOTICE HOW THE ANGEL FOUND GIDEON ENGAGED WHEN HE CAME TO CALL HIM.

Gideon had succeeded in getting together a quantity of wheat which was to be food for himself and family. Saved from the raids of the Midianites, and kept from the searching eye of the robber, he brought his grain to the winepress that he might thresh it ready for use. He was in this act when the angel of Jehovah appeared to him. Poor Gideon was in hiding, but the angel found him. God can always find the man He wants.

But is there not something remarkable about this? The time to deliver Israel has come. God wants a man to call together a company of men who shall be Jehovah's instruments in delivering His people. Where did God go to find His man? To a closed-up barn, in which was a man busy

at work. Truly that is suggestive. Take up your Bibles and run over the names of those who stand out as champions for God and the truth, and you will see how often God laid hands upon men whilst engaged in honest ordinary toil. It is the same in all parts of the Bible. The Old Testament and the New are alike in this. The very first man of whom we read on the first pages of the Bible, old father Adam, was put in a garden "to dress it and to keep it." The first two brothers were workers. Cain was a tiller of the soil, Abel was a keeper of sheep. When God appeared to Moses at Horeb in such glory that every leaf on the bush seemed to him to blaze with a fire of glory, the man was engaged in the work of a shepherd. And at an earlier period, when the Almighty wanted a man to manage the food supplies during the fourteen years of plenty and famine, He went to a prison to find him. When a king was to be appointed in Israel, the prophet Samuel laid hold of Saul, who, at the time, was seeking the lost asses which belonged to his father. When the same prophet was commissioned by the Lord to seek and anoint a successor to Saul, he went to the village of Bethlehem and poured his consecrating oil upon the head of a youth who was simply a shepherd. Elisha was summoned from the field, when he followed the plough, to succeed the great and powerful Elijah. We said that in the New Testament it is much the same. When our Saviour wanted men to be His pupils, men that He might train to carry on the work after His Crucifixion, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, He called Matthew from the receipt of customs, and James, Peter, and John from their fishing-boats. God uses the rich, the noble, the educated, and the upper classes. He can make kings His champions, and princes His servants. He has often done so, and will doubtless do so again. But He can use the people of ordinary capacity, and has often done so. He

can send His commission to the sheepfold, and use the youthful shepherd to accomplish His purposes. He can use you, toiler though you may be, to do good service for Him. The angel found Gideon at work. Work is honourable. God has often put honour upon the lowly worker. And our Lord Himself has consecrated all necessary human toil for ever. Let no man say that work is degrading, that work is low; to be an idler, to be a drone, is to be dishonoured.

III. SEE THE ANGEL'S ESTIMATE OF GIDEON.

The angel addressed Gideon as "thou mighty man of valour." What! A man in apparent poverty; a man threshing a bit of wheat with his own strength; a man having to prepare his very food in secret, lest it should be stolen; that man called by the angel a mighty man of valour! Poor, yet valiant!

"Ah," but you say, "that belongs to an old world time. We have altered all this now." Yes, indeed, we have made some changes, and changes which have not always been for the better. We call men noble now who are often ignoble. We speak of men as honourable, and right honourable, who are gamblers and drunkards, and I dare not say what beside. We allow men who are unclean, and have no regard for God and purity and godliness, to have the great swelling titles which should only be given to those who are truly great and good. It is about time that we recognised to the full that poor men may be valiant men, and that lowly men may be noble men. 'Tis only noble to be good.

When I was at Philadelphia, in the United States, some years ago, I paid a visit to one of the upper-grade public schools of the city. The head-teacher took me through the whole institution. The pupils were youths of from fourteen to about eighteen or nineteen years of age, and seemed to

come from all classes of people in the city. Among the rest I saw a coloured youth, an African, though not of the darkest colour. After I had exchanged a word with him, the head-teacher told me that the youth was very poor. He lived with his grandmother, an old coloured woman, who was very poor. I said, "How does he live?" He told me that he sold newspapers on the city streets in the evenings to get bread for himself and the old woman, and in the day attended the upper-grade public school as I saw him doing. And, of course, being in America, the school was quite free. I felt like going back to shake that coloured youth's hand as one of God's valiant ones. Scores of people are dubbed with the title of noble who never did anything half as valiant and noble as did that lad.

But I need not travel to America for illustrations of this kind. They lie all about us, ready to our hand. Does not every minister and every worker know of them?—servants who help to keep their old parents; sons who never tire of keeping their old mothers. Thousands of people, like Gideon, toil in secret, and are not known to fame as he became, but are among the valiant and the mighty. Earth's scroll has no page for their names in golden writing, but the angels of God have written them down in the Lamb's book of life in heaven.

IV. LASTLY, WE WILL NOTICE GIDEON'S COMPLAINT TO THE ANGEL.

When the angel had saluted Gideon, and said, "The Lord is with thee," Gideon speedily made reply, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this evil befallen us? . . . The Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." After the manner of men, this seems to be a very sensible reply. He could not see God in the affliction. He was unable to recognise the

Almighty in the poverty and suffering through which they were passing. Great and valiant and mighty as Gideon was, he was but a man.) And it is wonderful how like to us he seems to be in this. I suppose most of us have seen some sorrow, some pain, some bereavement, some disappointment, or some loss. God's hand was in it all, but how hard it was to see it.

I suppose we all find it easy to thank God, and see God with us when all goes well. When I am healthy and strong, when my wife is happy and hearty, and when all my children are getting on, I suppose I could easily thank God, and see God in it all. When a man stands on the mountain-top of prosperity, and looks out on the great fields of hope, and the whole air is vocal with the music of the birds of paradise, it is easy to see God and thank Him. But wait until the lark sinks songless to his nest, and the path of life becomes a wearisome journey, filled with stones and thorns; wait until sickness, sorrow, and bereavement enter the dwelling; wait until the man stands in the darkness of a foggy night of pain, loss, and despair; how does he act then? How did you act, my good friend, when you were in this condition? Were you any better than Gideon? Could you see the Lord in it? Were you able to kiss the sword that smote you? Did you bless the rod which made you smart? When in the dust we should all look in amazement at the angel visitor who came to us in our grief and said, "The Lord is with you."

And yet few things are more true in the experience of good men than the presence of God, and the love of God in the loss and pain. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "Before I was afflicted I went astray." Do you know anything more true than these words of Scripture?

Like Gideon, other servants of God, and we among the number of them, have supposed that prosperity was the

sure sign of God's presence and favour, and supposed that adversity and loss were the tokens of His absence. This was prevalent in the old world. The three friends who came to comfort Job proved to be sorry comforters indeed. They could not see how Job could have been a true man, and yet have all his affliction. To them it was a sure sign of God's absence or His displeasure. The disciples of our Lord, at a much later time, said, when they saw the man who was born blind, "Who did sin, this man or his parents?" They did not know which, but that it was one or other they had no doubt. Have we outgrown this? Haven't we talked of judgments, and all the rest, when we have seen men down? Haven't we said there *must* be something wrong with that man? See how God punishes him.

How careful we need to be here. How little we know of the all-embracing providence of God, who makes "all things work together for good to them that love Him." Some day we shall come to know that some of the very things we have thought hardest, and all against us, were truly God's ministers of mercy. You remember reading about old Jacob, when his sons came back from Egypt and said that the ruler of the land said they must not see his face again except Benjamin was with them. The poor old man got into a sad way over it. He said, "Joseph is not, and now you would take Benjamin away. My son shall not go. *All these things are against me.*" And yet at the time all was working for his good, but the old man did not know. There may be a good deal of mercy in our low estate, though, like Gideon, we can't see it. I know a godly man in London who told me that once he hoped to become very rich. He was accumulating wealth. His mind and heart were set upon getting money. He was a Christian man, but the love of gold interfered with his

religion, and injured his spiritual life. Then he said that serious and heavy losses came. But out of the losses came what he did not expect. Though he was not impoverished, he lost his desire to be rich, and was drawn nearer to God, and became a better man. He told me that the best thing that ever came to him was the loss of his money.

I suppose it is necessary that we should exercise great caution in all these matters lest we make mistakes, as did Gideon. The one important thing for us is to get nearer God, to love Him more, trust Him more, to listen more earnestly for His voice, and more earnestly and prayerfully obey His commands.

“Leave to His sovereign will
To choose and to command ;
With wonder filled, thou then shalt own
How wise how strong His hand.
Thou comprehend'st Him not,
Yet earth and heaven tell
God sits as sovereign on the throne ;
He ruleth all things well.”

Those Holy Fields.

“The holy land.”—ZECH. ii. 12.

THERE is no place on the face of the globe so attractive as Palestine. To its sacred shores millions of pilgrims have come, and every year the number of them increases. They come from all parts of the world to see it, and numbers of them would count themselves happy if they could end their days on its shores and have their bodies buried in its consecrated soil. Monarchs have left their thrones, their kingdoms, their peoples to fight for its freedom. Princes have sold their jewels, and considered it a privilege to be allowed to shed their blood side by side with the common soldier, whilst seeking to free the land of the Bible from the Infidel and the Turk.

When I first saw it I thanked God that at last I had been allowed to see the land in which my Saviour lived; and when I stood upon its soil I rejoiced with joy unspeakable that the longings and dreams of a life were about to be fulfilled. My experience was that through which millions of men have passed as the ages have gone. There is no abatement of the interest which the peoples of the world have always taken in it. From the far West and the farther East the cry is, “Still they come!”

I. *What makes it attractive.*

From what arises this world-wide attraction? How comes it that this land has such a hold upon the hearts of men of varying religions and different races? Why

is it that men have endured the fatigue and pain of long and laborious journeys in order to see it? Is it because of the excellency of its government? Alas! government it has none, save that exercised by the oppressive and degrading Turk, who blights everything he touches. The glory of the once powerful theocracy of the Holy Land has departed, and now the oppressor holds its scattered and poverty-stricken people in subjection, as with chains and rods of iron. Is it because of the power and might of its arms? Nay; soldiers it has none, save a few of the worst clothed and most savage in the world, the Turk, whose chief business is to keep the people in abject subjection, and, at the point of the sword and the muzzle of the rifle, collect from a half-starved people the oppressive taxes which they are almost as unable as they are unwilling to pay. If once it could boast a David, mighty in arms as well as powerful in deeds, now it has none of its own. Is it because of its size, its colossal proportions? This cannot be. The places which have most influenced men have not always been amongst the largest. Greece, where philosophy and art had their birth, was among the smallest of nations, and its whole extent might almost be compared to an English county. Rome, the once all-powerful ruler of the world, was only a city in Italy. England, upon whose colonial possessions the sun never sets, occupies but a small space on the map of Europe, and yet it holds the world in check. The Holy Land is among the least of countries. From north to south it barely exceeds 140 miles, whilst from east to west, at the most distant points, it does not exceed forty miles. Its whole extent is about equal to that of our own gallant little Wales. In the month of March last * I was at Bethel; a few days later I was near Safed, "the city set on a hill." I passed under

* In the year 1891.

the shadow of Tabor, and on another day I climbed the side of Mount Gerizim. From the top of any of these hills, on a clear day, nearly the whole extent of the land from east to west can be seen. Whilst travelling through the land I hardly ever lost sight of the blue outline of the mountains of Moab, which form the eastern boundary; and the snow-capped height of Hermon in the far north seemed always to be present with me, even when I was in the south. It is not its greatness which impresses one, for I left it feeling how small it is.

2. *The Holy Land is endeared to the hearts of men because the Son of God walked its streets, and made it for ever sacred by His holy life and sacrificial death.*

I longed to see Palestine, as millions of others did and do, that I might visit the place where He was born, and see those fields at Bethlehem, in which the lowly shepherds kept their flocks that night in which the gates of heaven swung back, and for the first time in human history, some of the celestial music which the angels make escaped to earth. I wanted to climb the hills at Nazareth, not so much that I might study their rocks and beautiful wild flowers, as that I might have the inestimable privilege of walking where He walked, and of sitting on those hills where He sat. I hungered to see the village of Bethany, that I might think of Him who so often found shelter there at the home of Martha, and congenial company in the presence of her sister Mary and her brother Lazarus. My heart yearned to sit on the Mount of Olives, that I might feast my eyes with a sight of the city of Jerusalem, that city of David the great king; that city which stoned the prophets, laughed at its advisers, and killed them who were sent to help and bless it; that city which put to death the Lord of Life and Glory. It is attractive because

it was there the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God made known to perishing men the love of God for a lost world, that the Holy Land holds the affections of the peoples of the world.

3. *The Holy Land is striking and interesting in many of its aspects.*

Its climate is the most remarkable in the world. Though it may be described as a strip of Syrian coast-land, in it the traveller finds all the degrees of heat and cold experienced elsewhere in all parts of the globe. Down in the Jordan valley, far below the level of the sea, he finds the heat of the tropics; whilst away in the north there is perpetual snow. In a single day's ride I passed from the biting cold to the burning hot. In the early morning, when rounding the shoulder of one of the slopes of Hermon, my horse was almost knee-deep in snow, whilst the camp servants amused themselves by snow-balling each other. Before noon the same day I had ridden into great heat, and where not a particle of snow could be seen, except on the summit of Hermon, now left behind.

Nor is its position less striking. Situated on the farthest outpost of the East, in a westerly direction, it seems to stretch its hands to the western peoples. Shut in on the east by the trackless desert, and on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, it formed a great highway between Africa and the northern countries. Over its mountains and through its valleys have tramped the feet of the vast hordes who sought the rich climes of Egypt and the more central portions of Africa. On its great plains the war-chariots of the ancients have dashed to battle, and the Crusaders tried their strength. In ancient days it was believed to be the very centre of the earth. I have placed my hands on a piece of marble which stands in the Greek

church at Jerusalem, and have seen scores of Russian pilgrims on their knees reverently kissing this same stone, believing it to be the centre of the universe, and the place out of which was taken the earth of which old father Adam was made.

But, if in this sense the Holy Land is not at the centre of things, it is in a higher and a better. It was there He lived and suffered who was the Second Person in the Trinity. It was there the great mystery of the Incarnation was enacted. It was there men witnessed the miracles of the Son of God, miracles which opened blind eyes, arrested the progress of disease, and gave back the dead to sorrowing friends. It was there the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man had their fullest manifestation. It was there that Christ Jesus lived and died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. It was there He burst the barriers of the tomb, and breaking the power of death and hell, rose in triumph, and ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, to plead our cause in the Father's presence.

When the Holy Land first appears on the page of history, it is as the place to which Abraham came to erect his altar to the one God. And it is that same land in which, in after ages, Solomon erected the first house for the worship of the true God which the world had ever seen. It was there the prophets of God make their appearance, fill their day, and left the world their thoughts and predictions. It was there that the Cross was erected with its outstretched arms to embrace the world. Mount Calvary is the central point of the world's religious life and thought. If ever that universal brotherhood of man, for which the world longs, is to be realised, it will come in proportion as men climb Mount Calvary and meet in love at the Cross of Christ.

Jaffa to Jerusalem.

“By sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem.”—
2 CHRON. ii. 16.

It will take me a long time to forget my first sight of the Holy Land. It was on a Monday morning, and the day will be ever memorable to me as that in which my eyes gazed, for the first time, upon that land which has played such a prominent part in the history of men, and influenced them both for time and for eternity.

We approached it from the Sea.

When I sought my cabin on the Sunday night, it was only to rest a little, for sleep was almost out of the question, when I knew that the morrow's sun would reveal to me the Land of Promise. Early in the morning I was on deck, glass in hand, to catch the first faint outline of the coast. When I could clearly see it, I stood speechless among the many passengers who, like myself, were eager to feast their eyes upon it. It is the Holy Land, the Land of Promise, the Land of Canaan. There it is, the land to which the patriarch Abraham came as a pilgrim father to erect an altar to the one true God and establish a worship which, in its conceptions of the Deity, transcended that of his country left behind, or of any known by the nations of the world. There it is, the land in which the saintly Isaac, quiet, contemplative, retiring, non-political Isaac, lived and died; the land in which David rose from the rank of lowly shepherd to victorious king, and proved himself a kingly

man, though no descendant of proud aristocratic families, and in which he composed and wrote those marvellous psalms which form at once the main body of Hebrew poetry, and furnish a book for pious reading which many of us think are the products of Divine inspiration. There it is, the land in which those brave old Hebrew prophets so nobly witnessed for God to the men of their own day, and boldly denounced unrighteousness in high places and low places, as well as uttered predictions of coming events. There it is, the land in which Rebekah lived and Rachel died; the land in which Ruth gleaned in the fields of Bethlehem, and though a stranger, in the mysterious providence of God, became an ancestor of the Divine Man.

The Land of the Saviour.

Behind those hills the Son of God was born, and lived for perhaps thirty-three years, bringing God near to man as never before, and lifting man near to God as never since; revealing the great and blessed fact that God is not an angry, spiteful, revengeful being, standing with a drawn sword to smite down every one who goes astray, and taking pleasure in the torment of His creatures; but a living, gentle, patient, merciful Father—a Father to whose heart every one of His children is dear, and for whose salvation He sent His Son to die, and who grieves over every sinner, and exclaims over the worst, “O Ephraim, how shall I give thee up?” On that sacred soil the blessed Gospel of the grace of God—a Gospel which saves men, and the worst of them—was preached by His lips who “spake as never man spake.” It was over those hills at which I now gaze that He who introduced new forces among men, which changed their hearts and altered the course of their lives, planted His Church among a handful of men, small and feeble as the mustard-seed, but which has grown and

spread until now countless millions are, beneath its branches, sheltered from the winds and storms of the world, part of these in the Church triumphant above, and the rest in the Church below, in all the lands under the sun. Thinking of all this my heart beat faster, and my eyes sparkled with excitement as I came "by sea to Jaffa." He must be a strange Christian who could, unmoved, for the first time gaze upon the shores of Palestine.

Joppa.

But, look ! yonder is Jaffa, the ancient and once famous Joppa. Nestling there under that hill, it forms a charming picture, and conveys a most favourable impression of the beauty of the land, an impression which is quickly dissipated when the traveller enters the narrow, dirty, stinking streets of the town itself. As we land among the rocks we see the wreck of a Russian steamer, which came to grief some time ago, and which is rapidly breaking to pieces under the force of the winds and waves. Wrecks have been of frequent occurrence on this coast, for there is no harbour. Under any government save that of the wretched and blighting Turk, this would have been altered long ago.

Historical and Biblical Associations of Joppa.

Joppa has occupied an important position in Biblical and modern history. Let us hastily notice some of the associations of the place. In order to note some of them, let us go at once to the "house of Simon the tanner." Climbing the rough staircase to the flat roof of the house, we are rewarded for our pains. A bright beautiful afternoon sun shines down upon us as we stand on the housetop, which may possibly be on the site of that where Peter slept of old time. Out yonder is a fine long stretch of the Medi-

terranean Sea. In imagination I see great floats of timber gliding on yonder blue waters. They are the cedar-trees, fir-trees, and alghum-trees cut from the forests of Lebanon, then, as now, richly covered with timber, and sent by King Hiram to Joppa. King Solomon, in exchange for this timber, gives huge quantities of grain and wine and oil, the produce of the Holy Land, a land once flowing with milk and honey, but now seeming as if out of the very heavens God had stoned it to death, and heaped piles of the stones upon its grave. That cedar was used by Solomon in erecting the first house for the worship of the true God which the world ever saw, the Temple which stood on Mount Moriah, the spot where Abraham came near to offering his son Isaac. Do you see yonder man hasting to get into that ship bound for Tarshish? Notice how eager he is to reach the boat, though the winds are rising and the waves swelling in such a manner that most people would be afraid and stand back. That man is the ancient prophet Jonah, one of the few missionary servants of God who have turned their back upon duty, conscience, and God. Ordered to ancient Nineveh, to witness against its wickedness and crying sin, which made its inhabitants unfit to live, he proved himself a coward, a hireling, and a disgrace to his sacred calling, by fleeing from his God-appointed work. Soon after he leaves this port of Joppa he encountered the storm, the tempest, the disaster, the sorrow, and the pain which overtake those who care less for God's service than self-interest, and more for their own ease than for the salvation of the people whom the Almighty seeks to save.

Thousands upon thousands of the poor of this and other lands have to thank God for the blessings they have received in the shape of good warm clothing, all through the kindness of an ancient dame who lived at Joppa. Thousands of ladies in Christendom have to rejoice that a way

was open for them to render service to their poorer sisters, by the thoughtfulness of a lady of Joppa. It was here that Dorcas lived, and made "coats and garments" for the widows and others of the poor. If for nothing else, Joppa should be remembered for this.

But it was on the housetop here that Peter had that remarkable vision of so much importance in the unfolding of the work of the Gospel, and of such consequence in the history of the Church of Christ. Up to that time most of the fathers of the faith, together with the disciples themselves, were hedged and fenced about by the narrowness and exclusiveness of the Jewish religion. All the efforts of the Saviour to teach them, and the endowment of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, sufficed not to enlarge their vision, and widen their scope enough to take in the Gentiles to the benefits of His redemption who said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Here Peter's conception was enlarged. Here he had such a revelation from God as led him fearlessly to strike the death-blow of that proud spirit which makes men teach that they are the special custodians of God's grace, that Divine love can only flow through the channels they manufacture, and on such conditions and to such people only as they appoint, as if salvation, like the modern "cure of souls," were something to be presented to one's friends and relatives, and even sold by auction to the highest bidder. Rising from his vision on the housetop, where we now stand, Peter, heedless of the authorities at Jerusalem, who afterwards called his conduct in question, boldly declared the God-given message: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."

But we must start for Jerusalem.

But we must hasten on toward Jerusalem. Leaving Joppa behind us, we wend our way through delightful orange groves, filled with trees heavily laden with their rich golden fruit, which, to the English traveller, unaccustomed to such sights at home, make an attractive and pretty picture. Emerging from these orange groves we soon find ourselves on the great and beautiful plains of Sharon. Mile after mile we ride over these plains, charmed with the beauty of the wild flowers, and thinking of Him who is called the "Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley."

Every foot of the way up to Jerusalem is full of interest, and bristles with Scriptural associations, but we must not now stop to note them, as we ride a swift Arab horse. Let us remember, however, that in all ages this has been the great thoroughfare to Jerusalem. Along this road, with measured step and slow, came the camel trains of the ancients, and all the material for the Temple we saw floating down the Mediterranean to Joppa. Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles have ridden over these plains, and gazed with admiration upon their beautiful flowers. And the tramp of the feet of multitudes of Crusaders and the clash of their arms have been heard here as they marched to rescue the Holy Land from the Infidel and the Turk.

As we pass through Ramleh we get our first sight of the lepers, who, as of old, sit by the way still begging. And a sorry sight it is. As they hold up their rotting flesh, and we see their fingerless hands and their swollen disfigured faces, we can only shudder and pity them, as we long for the power of One of old at whose touch even this loathsome disease fled.

It was on the second day out from Jaffa that we had our first sight of Jerusalem. Seated on my horse, I lifted

my white helmet and thanked God as my eyes rested upon Jerusalem yonder in the distance—Jerusalem, to which I will take you in my next address. I will close this one by quoting a few words from my diary, written on the spot, that happy day, and posted off the next day to my family at home. “At nearly five o’clock we had our first sight of Jerusalem. With uncovered head I marched toward it, thanking God that I was permitted to see it, and earnestly praying that I might be considered worthy to enter the New Jerusalem.”

Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.

“He beheld the city, and wept over it.”—LUKE xix. 41.

ON a sunny Sunday afternoon in March 1891, I sat on the Mount of Olives. To my dying day I shall remember the pretty panoramic view of the city of Jerusalem as seen from where I sat. I confidently predict that if ever you go there and see it you will never forget it. Let me take you to it in imagination. Suppose yourselves seated in the little minaret which crowns the summit of the mount, and from which, perhaps, the best possible view of the city is obtained. Let us sit in silence a moment, with heads uncovered, as we gaze out yonder and try to take in all we can of the city and its surroundings. As you view the picture remember that millions of pilgrims have climbed this mount that they might feast their eyes with the sight you now get, and that they might, with beating hearts, quietly thank God for the privilege they enjoyed. Saints from all climes under the sun have here shed tears. Soldiers who fell fighting for the freedom of Jerusalem have first come to this spot, and, lifting their helmets and bowing their knees, have committed themselves to God. The ancient fathers of the faith, and the Apostles themselves have been on this mount many a time and oft. And He whose servants I trust we all are, hallowed it for ever by His presence here.

The Biblical Associations of Jerusalem.

Down there below us is the valley of the Kidron, not

without historic associations. There, at the foot of the hill, lie peacefully sleeping many generations of the dead, whose small tombstones are so thickly scattered as to completely pave the side of Olivet for some distance from the bottom of the vale. Conspicuous among the tombs are three which are pointed out as those of persons no less distinguished than Zechariah, St. James, and Absalom. It was over that vale of Kidron that David fled when his son was in rebellion and sought to grasp his father's sceptre and occupy his throne. I can see David, heartbroken, with covered head and bare feet, with great sobs and tears, wending his weary way up the side of this same Olivet, anxious only for the safety of his unworthy son who has drawn away the hearts of his people. It was over this same vale of Kidron that David's God, the Saviour of the world, also came with sad heart and sorrowful spirit on that terrible night in which He had that great agony in the Garden of Gethsemane down there, into which I will take you another time. And it was into this same valley of the Kidron that Judas, who bargained away the liberty of his Lord for a few paltry pieces of silver, led the armed multitude, whose lanterns and torches illumine the whole valley, that they might apprehend Him whose command legions of angels would gladly obey. And away yonder to the left of the valley is "the field of blood," purchased with the price of Him who went "as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."

The Holy City.

But over and beyond the vale is "Jerusalem, the city of the great king; Mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth." There it is, Jerusalem the golden, beautiful, glorious. Attractive alike for its historic association and charming

situation, it impresses all beholders. More than eight hundred times is this famous city mentioned in the word of God, and it has a larger place in the histories of the ages and in the hearts of men than any other city in the world. Seven-and-twenty times has this city been besieged. Again and again it has been destroyed, and again and again it has risen from its ruins. Famine, pestilence, fire, and sword have devoured it and its sons, but there it is still. The banners of the Persians have been hoisted within its walls; the flying eagles of the Romans have polluted its sacred shrines; the gleaming banners of the adventurous Crusaders have waved within its walls; and the Crescent of the Turk now usurps its high places. Though David no longer reigns on Mount Zion, and though from Mount Moriah the smoking incense of a nation's prayers no longer ascends, the city exists, and will exist, until the day dawn when God's ancient people shall once more fill its streets, crowd its marts, and, their hardness removed, shall render homage to David's greater Son, and Jew and Gentile, one in heart, shall dwell together in love and peace.

But let us, as did the Saviour, behold the city. There, in the foreground, to the left, stands the great Temple space, occupying some thirty-five acres of land. In that once sacred enclosure is the spot where Abraham came near to offering his son Isaac in sacrifice. On that spot stood the Temple, designed by King David, built by King Solomon, rebuilt by Zerubbabel and King Herod. It was there the mystic Shechinah fire shone forth as the visible symbol of Jehovah's presence with His people. It was there the tribes came up to the great national feasts. There centred all that was political, poetic, and religious in connection with God's chosen people. It is to this spot that the oppressed and longsuffering Jews in every land to-day turn their faces in worship and sorrow, and pray for

restoration to their own land. It was to that spot the highly-favoured mother brought the infant Saviour and placed Him in the arms of holy and devout Simeon, who, like the best of his countrymen, waited for the long-promised consolation of Israel. It was at that spot the boy Christ gave promise of coming wisdom and strength by the questions He asked of the learned doctors of the Jewish law. And it was there He stood when He said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

The Mosque of Omar, the most beautiful possessed by the Mohammedans outside Mecca, now defiles the holy place. It is built round the natural rock, which they carefully guard, and from which they say their great prophet ascended to heaven. As you gaze at the shining marble yonder, you cannot help thinking of the goodly stones of the ancient Temple which once stood there.

Beyond Mount Moriah you see Mount Zion, with the square building which is now called the Tower of David. Once these two mountains were connected by a bridge. Mount Zion was David's seat; and in the second Psalm, where God speaks of His conquering King, He is set "upon the holy hill of Zion."

Away to the right is the Christian quarter, and that great dome you see yonder is the roof of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which we are to visit another time. We have not time to stop and describe all the famous parts of this city. But, as you gaze at them all, you will not wonder that one of its ancient people, who loved it well, should exclaim: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."

But when Jesus, Himself ■ Jew, sat where we sit, and gazed down upon the city, "He wept over it." If you ask me why, I only need refer you to the text. It tells its own story; it is its own interpreter.

Jerusalem's Sins.

Favoured above all cities on earth, its sins were such as sank it down to hell. In that city God revealed His glory to men. The Son of God walked its streets and offered peace to its people. There He planted His Church with its message of love; there the Holy Ghost came down in rich blessing at Pentecost; and there the Saviour of men offered salvation and rest to the heavily burdened sons of men. Yet that city rejected Him. It turned the glory of its ancient symbolic worship into a religion of ceremonies, priests, and vestments. And when the Saviour invited its inhabitants to Himself for life, it laughed Him to scorn. It had stoned and killed the prophets; it despised the apostles, and hated the Gospel. It employed secret spies to watch the Saviour, bribed one of His followers to betray Him, laid violent hands upon Him, and, well knowing Him to be innocent, feed false witness to swear away His life. Its leaders were afraid of the people; its seats of justice were filled by men who gave sentence against conscience and law; and its religious teachers had sunk so low that they preferred a murderer to the very Messiah whom their own prophets had taught them to expect. The climax of wickedness was reached, the cup of iniquity was full, when Jerusalem slew the Son of God, and as He sat on the Mount at this time He saw it all, and He wept.

Jerusalem's Sorrows.

He saw its coming sorrows as well as He saw its present sins. The text is a sorrowful prediction of coming destruction which overtook it, swift and sharp. They cried, "His blood be on us;" and on them it came. The histories of peoples of the whole earth furnish but few such illustrations of retribution so awful and complete. Within the lifetime of many of those who cried, "Crucify Him!" and

who mocked at His pain and agony, the resistless and relentless Romans came. They planted their legions on the summit and slopes of this Olivet on which we sit. Down there they placed their terrible machines for hurling destructive stones into the city. Yonder you may see them digging their trenches, building their walls, cutting off all supplies of food, starving the people into such straits that mothers, forgetting their maternal instincts in the pangs of hunger, sought relief in feeding upon their offspring. As you watch you will see the people perish before the fire and sword. Jerusalem's sons were crucified until the supply of crosses failed. The sword, reeking with Jewish blood, only ceased its deadly work when the hand that gripped it could grasp it no longer. The slave marts were glutted with those whom famine, fire, sword, and crucifixion spared.

What an awful lesson the siege and sacking of Jerusalem presents to those who have eyes to see. It says, as plainly as can be, both to communities and to individuals, Beware of rejecting the Son of God! Beware of choosing error and putting it in the place of truth; beware of calling evil good, and darkness light! In this land of Bibles, churches, and privileges, let us fear lest, having an offer and promise of rest, we close our hearts against the truth and perish.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

“There they crucified Him.”—LUKE xxiii. 33.

THE crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the most momentous event in the history of the universe. The creation of the world, when the morning stars sang together for joy, was a great undertaking, even for a Divine hand; the destruction of the world at the Deluge, when man's wickedness so cried to heaven for punishment that the fountains of the great deep were let loose upon it, was a work at which some men have since marvelled; the confusion of tongues at Babel, and the scattering of men upon the face of the earth, was a great epoch in the world's history; the call of Abraham from the East to settle in Canaan and establish the worship of the One God in a truer and nobler form than men had seen since the time old father Adam talked with the Jehovah face to face in the Garden, was a marvellous unfolding of God's gracious plans and purposes; and the placing of the Israelites in the Land of Promise at the close of a long series of providential marvels and miracles, was a settlement which bears the marks of omnipotent hands. But all these hide behind the Cross. The redemption of the world by Jesus Christ was a greater act of omnipotent love than its creation. It was far more glorious to save the world by the love of the Cross than to drown it with water. The reflection of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ was far grander than the smoking victims on the altars of Abraham. The establish-

ment of the Church on earth, preparing men for the Church in heaven, as the outcome of the crucifixion of Christ, far transcends the placing of the ancient Hebrews in the Land of Promise. It was to Mount Calvary that all the events of the past looked on. The patriarchs saw the day of Christ afar off, and were glad. The prophets, illumined by a light not of men, looked down the ages, and, seeing the Cross, spake of Christ and His death in language which reads like history rather than prediction, whilst the sweetest notes of the Psalms of old are those which are filled with the glorious theme of the Cross of Christ.

Not only does this text tell of the death of the Saviour, but it points to the spot where it took place. "There they crucified Him." Where? At Jerusalem, at Calvary, the place of a skull, the spot in which there was a garden, a tomb, a burying-place. It is to this spot I now desire to take you.

Inside the Gate.

Imagine yourselves at Jerusalem, in the busy street outside the Jaffa Gate. Pause just one moment to look at the crowd, mostly composed of men. Their costumes are of every colour under the sun, legs, arms, and faces browned and darkened with the heat of the sun and the absence of soap. There goes the tall Jew with his long, striped, cotton coat, his downcast look, and his ringlet of hair piously worn in front of his ear. You see the Greek priest with his brimless tall hat, which looks almost like a chimney-pot widened out at the top. He is one of a numerous tribe. Here are gathered the halt, the lame, the blind. Down there, a little past the gate, sit numbers of lepers, whilst all about us close by are hawkers, beggars, and tradesmen. Over there scores of men are squatting,

sitting, lying, smoking, and sipping black coffee with all the ease and indifference of men who are regardless of time, even though they possess not a sovereign in the world.

We must get through the gate. The gateway is none too wide, and there is a sharp turn just as you enter, as if it were so constructed as to enable any who kept it to cut down those who sought to force an entrance. As you pass these portals of Jerusalem for the first time your hearts will beat high, and perhaps you will think of those words, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion ;" "Enter His gates with praise."

You are now standing in David's Street, which runs in a pretty straight line right through the city to the Temple space at the bottom yonder. There, on your right, at the highest point of Mount Zion, stands a square building called David's Tower. It may have been on the spot on which it stands that David had his seat and Solomon his throne. There some of the Psalms of David may have been composed, and the Proverbs of Solomon written. If this be the spot to which the Queen of Sheba came, it seems a pity to see the Turkish soldiers guarding its gates, and the Crescent waving from its highest battlement.

But we must hasten on. You will be forced to notice the narrow, dirty, slippery streets, and the open-fronted little shops in which the Oriental sits as unconcerned about you and apparently about his business as if he were unconscious of both. As in olden times, the money-changers are here, and in large numbers, too. There they sit at almost every other shop-front, with their wire-covered boxes well stocked with abundance of change. But, look out ! Here comes a long string of camels, gliding along with their great burdens, knocking over everything which is not speedily moved, and which will sweep you over, too,

if you do not squeeze yourself into some recess or bend beneath the loads they carry. You will never know how ugly the camel is, nor how useful, until you visit the East.

About half-way down David's Street we turn to the left into Christian Street, and, wending our way past shops whose fronts are hung with candles as big as broomsticks, and painted all colours, we take a sharp turn into a narrow street and find ourselves in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Sacred Places.

I am not much of a believer in so-called sacred places. But when I stood in front of that church I could not help feeling that if there be one place on earth more sacred than another it is this. Through many long centuries of the Christian era men and women from all lands have come to this building, and those which before stood on the same site, and believed they came to the same place where "they crucified Him," as well as to the spot where His sacred body lay in the grave for three days. Day after day, and year after year, they come, in one continuous stream—rich and poor, old and young, grown men and little children—as I saw them when I was there. The marble floors of the different churches beneath the same roof are made smooth, not only with the feet of those who walk thereon, but with the hands and knees and tears of the devout of all lands. If the traditions which make this church contain the site "where they crucified Him" be true, then we may well uncover our heads and take off our shoes, for the place whereon we enter is holy ground. It was here He made peace for man with God. It was here the holy women stood who had ministered to Him of their

substance, and stood by Him bravely when men grew cowardly and fled. It was here that she who was most highly favoured of women had the arrow pierce her heart. It was here the Roman soldier stood and exclaimed that this was the Son of God. It was here the penitent thief, though late in life, obtained mercy, and was promised a speedy passage to Paradise. It was here that the dying Saviour committed His mother to that disciple who ever afterwards became to her a true son. It was here that the dying victim in His last agony found breath in which to pray for His murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And it was here that, when the sun in the heavens, ashamed of the wicked doings of men, hid his face, the rocks rent and the earth shook. Thinking of all this I do not wonder that this church is endeared to the hearts of men, and that the bravest of many lands, our own among them, have shed their blood in its behalf.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Let us uncover our heads and enter. As soon as ever you got inside the doors, you meet with a rude shock which you will not soon forget. Behind the doors, in a recess, several Turkish soldiers are squatting on their mat and drinking coffee. And why are they here? The church is owned by Greeks, Armenians, Roman Catholics, and Copts. Each of these sects has its own portion of the building, and carries on its own particular forms of worship. And such is their hatred and jealousy of each other, that sometimes they fight even to the shedding of blood at the sacred shrines, and they find it impossible to agree about the key of the church. So the Turk, the fanatical Mohammedan Turk, has put his soldiers there to keep the key, and preserve order among the sects. What a bitter satire is this!

and how opposed to the spirit of Him who said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

Passing by a multitude of places of interest in this building, we turn to the left and come at once to the sepulchre. It stands in the centre of a round building, and is itself a covered structure. It is decorated with a profusion of candles, lamps, and other ornaments, which we must pass. It consists of two very small chambers. The first, the "Angels' Chapel," contains a piece of rock which, it is said, was rolled from the door of the sepulchre! The second room is entered by a low door, and is about six feet long by about seven feet wide. The tomb stands about three feet high, and has a marble slab or flag lying on it, cracked through the middle. A number of lamps are always burning over it, and all the walls of the little room are cased with marble. When I was inside the first time two Greek priests were on duty there, and sprinkled a few drops of rose-water upon us as we stood in silent awe at the reputed tomb of our Saviour.

Golgotha.

Leaving this place with reverent step and subdued spirits, let us ascend a few steps and come at once to the place of the Cross. It is in a little chapel made rich with the valuable gifts of pilgrims. Beneath the profusely decorated altar there is a hole in the marble slab into which it is said the Cross was placed. Near to this is a crack in the rock, which is said to be the rent which was made when the Saviour died. If you will with me get on your knees we will examine this hole and this crack, and we shall find the natural rock to lend its countenance to the tradition which locates the Crucifixion here. And behind the Holy Sepulchre, underneath a portion of the church, you can see several

rocky excavations, two of which are pointed out as the tombs of Joseph and Nicodemus, and which doubtless formed an ancient burial-place. Standing here in this little chapel in front of that altar, we cannot help asking, And is that really the place where our Lord was crucified? I have no desire to discuss the question as to the real place. And what does it matter? We know it could not possibly have been far away, even if this were not the real spot. Tens of thousands have come where we now are, and believing it to be the real place, have worn the marble with their lips. Before I hasten to close, let me mention a beautiful tradition, which is doubtless nothing more. It is that Adam was buried here, and when the blood fell from the Cross it came upon the skull of the father of the race. I say it is a beautiful tradition—the First Adam and the Second meeting in death. I do not think there can be any truth in the story, but I say, “There they crucified Him,” whose atoning blood removed the curse of Adam’s fall. Whatever mischief the sin of the First entailed, the redemption by the Second removed. The plaster is as wide as the wound. The remedy as complete as the disease.

I say to you, Christians, who stand with me at this place, “There they crucified” your Lord and King, the King of whom “Moses and the prophets did speak.” I say to the sinner, “There they crucified Him” who paid thy debt, who waits to snap the fetters of thy bondage, and lead thee into the larger light and liberty of God’s children. I say to the rich man, “There they crucified Him” who has made thee His steward, and see that thou be faithful, for He will call thee to account. I say to the poor man, “There they crucified Him” who cares for thee, and will make thee a sharer of the riches of His grace. And to the man who dreams of great reforms in State as well as in Church, I say, “There they crucified Him” who alone can interpret

and give practical shape to all thy fondest hopes. I say to all, Shall not we fall at His feet and do Him reverence? Let the soldier lay down his sword, the workman his tools, the statesman suspend his controversy, and the king doff his crown, while we all reverently sing—

“All hail the power of Jesu’s name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”

Bethlehem, the City of David.

“They two went until they came to Bethlehem.”—RUTH i. 19.

BETHLEHEM is one of the oldest cities in Palestine. As far back as the distant days of Jacob we know that it had an existence. It was near to this place he had come when the wife he loved so well breathed her last, and her soul took its departure to the other world. Next to Jerusalem, it is the most popular place in the Holy Land. Of all the millions of pilgrims who find their way to the Holy City, there are but few, if any, who return to their own land until they have first visited “the city of David, which is called Bethlehem.” Nor is this because of its size, its commercial importance, or its beautiful and costly buildings. Men visit London and New York, and after weeks spent on their streets, return home, feeling that years are needed to grasp the proportions of these cities; but Bethlehem is a village partly on a hill-side in a rural district. Men visit Birmingham and Manchester and Liverpool, and are struck with amazement at the huge factories and warehouses of these cities, and marvel at their collections of goods to be sent to all the markets of the world; Bethlehem, except a few people who work religious figures into pearl and other shells, is destitute of manufacturers and manufactories. Those who can spare the time and the money visit the city of Athens, that they may revel among the architectural and artistic skill seen in the ruined remains of her ancient temples and famous Acropolis; Bethlehem has no such

treasures. And yet this village, always "little among the thousands of Israel," has a fame which outrivals the others, and has attracted and touched men's hearts as they never did. It was here the Son of God was born; it was here the holy child Jesus first saw the light of that world into which He had such a poor reception, and which so cruelly sent Him out; and it was here the ancient prediction concerning the coming of Him who was from everlasting had its fulfilment. Except the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, there is not a place on the face of the globe so dear to Christian hearts as the Church of the Nativity in "the city of David, which is called Bethlehem."

Six miles from Jerusalem.

Situated some six miles from Jerusalem, it is within easy reach. We can ride to it with comfort in about one and a half hours. Let me take you to it. Starting from that gate at Jerusalem which opens on to the Bethlehem road, we will turn to the left as we come out of the city and pass down the inclin . There on the roadside, sitting apart, and on our right, crouch the lepers with their poor disfigured features and rotting limbs, begging in pitiful plaintive tones.

Coronation of Solomon.

In a few moments we are in the vale of Gihon. It was into this vale that, at the bidding of King David when old, and feeble, and dying, Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, led Solomon, seated on his father's mule, that he might be chosen as David's successor. Here in this valley, both its sides filled with the assembled multitude, the priest, having brought a horn filled with sacred oil from the tabernacle, anointed

the young man as King of Israel, to fill the place of his noble father. This done, the trumpet was blown, and there went up a great burst of music and shouting, so loud that, in the language of Holy Writ, "the earth rent with the sound of them," whilst they cried, "God save King Solomon!"

Rachel's Tomb.

Leaving this historic valley, we soon reach a little building which, with its dome-shaped roof, is revered alike by Jews, Christians, and Moslems as the place of Rachel's tomb, the beloved and favourite wife of Jacob. Standing in front of it, as we do for a few moments, we think of the pretty romantic story of Jacob's toil for the woman buried here. Fourteen long years he served his uncle that he might have for wife his cousin Rachel, whom he so dearly loved. It is true the Scriptures say something about the time seeming to him "but as one day." But that sounds like poetry. Let him say, who has toiled and waited for the wife of his youth, how long that time was. None else can.

Naomi and Ruth.

Hastening on we are soon in sight of the place we seek, for yonder it is, with all its sacred memories and poetic stories gathering about it as we approach. Do you see that company of women there, gathering about two other women who have just arrived with marks of travel upon them? Who are they, and what does their gathering mean? They are ancient Bethlehem women, who have come out to give a welcome to a former neighbour and friend, who has just come back from the strange land in which she has left behind her dead husband and two dead

sons. Well might that ancient matron exclaim in the sorrow of her heart, "Call me not Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

Fields of the Shepherds.

Do you see those fields down there? It was out there in those cornfields that Ruth gleaned after the reapers, filling her veil with ears of corn for the support of herself and her mother-in-law. It was here she met the prosperous farmer, Boaz, married to whom she became the grandmother of King David, and was thus an ancestor of the Saviour Himself. It was in those fields at which we now look that the shepherd boy who afterwards became king kept his father's sheep. It was there he manifested his pluck and courage by slaying the wild beasts which tore the flock he kept. It was, perhaps, in those fields he composed some of his sweet Psalms, such as, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters." It was in those fields he left his sheep in the care of an assistant when he went forth to the army and saw and slew the enemy of his country, Goliath. It was in those fields he did his daily duty when Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, came to anoint him as Israel's future king. It was down there, in those same plains and fields, at a time much later than David, that a remarkable event happened whilst other shepherds watched their sheep. We know how the darkness of night was illumined by the mystic glory of the Lord, which shone down there on those fields, and how the valley resounded and the hills echoed as the heavenly hosts sang of "peace on earth and goodwill to men." And was it not over these plains and yonder village that the guiding star shone when the eastern patriarchs came with their rich presents to do homage to

Him whom they heard of as "King of the Jews," but who is known to us as the Redeemer of the world, our Saviour, my Lord and my God?

The Well at Bethlehem.

We hasten to the little town. As we are about to enter it we pause for a moment at a well from which we see a woman drawing water. This well is the centre of as fine a passage in history as we need wish to read. Forty years and more after David was anointed king he was at war with a powerful enemy. He was intrenched in one of the strongholds of the land, surrounded by a number of veterans who, like himself, bore the scars of many a conflict, and wore the marks of many a victory. The Philistines were in possession of Bethlehem, which, for the time being, was to them a strong garrison. David was suddenly seized with a passion for his native town, and longing for a drink of its waters, from which he so often drank in boyhood, he cried, "Oh that one would give me a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate." Three of his brave and fearless warriors, with a courage and daring which might pass as of the British rather than of the fighting men of those remote ages, at once started for the well. Cutting their way through the ranks of the Philistines, their swords dripping with the blood of the slain, they reached this well, drew from its depth the clear cold water for which their commander had longed, and fighting their way back, placed in his hands the goblet whose contents they had risked their lives to get. To their amazement, and to the credit of their king, he would not drink it, but poured it out before them. It is at once an illustration of the self-devotion and daring of the soldier, and of the self-denial of the king.

Joseph and Mary.

May we not pause one moment more before we enter the town to gaze at yonder two travellers who approach. There has been much movement in the country, for the Roman ruler has issued orders for a census, and all must go to their native places to be taxed. This couple, Joseph and Mary, have come from the north, that they may be enrolled in their native village of Bethlehem. She is not in a fit condition to travel, but they bear the marks of their journey. What must have been the feelings of this young woman as she approached this place?

On entering the city we find its houses well-built, its people well clad, its shops well stocked, and the whole place wearing an air of prosperity seen in but few of the towns of Palestine.

The Church of the Nativity.

Following the main street we come right to the place which makes this little town famous now, the church which is said to cover the very spot at which the Saviour was born. Entering the church we find ourselves in a long large nave, rich in its possession of five rows of rare old marble columns, each of a single stone, some of which, it is said, once stood in the Temple at Jerusalem. This great nave is common to all Christians. But the other portions of the church are marked off as the property of the different sects, the Greeks, the Armenians, and the Roman Catholics, whose suspicion, jealousy, and hatred of each other are such that Turkish soldiers are always on duty in the church to maintain order and prevent bloodshed. Descending steps to a depth of twenty feet below the floor level of the church, we reach the cave called the Grotto of the Nativity,

over and around which the beautiful church is erected. The walls of this cave are covered with marbles, pictures, and embroidery, the natural rock being nowhere exposed that I can remember. There at one side on the floor shines a star, silver I think, which marks the spot where it is said God was made flesh and began His earthly life. Over this star swing some sixteen or more silver lamps, placed there by the different sects, and always kept alight. Upon that marble pavement, where tens of thousands of people in all ranks of life have knelt, I bent my knees that I might read the inscription, placed my hand upon the star, and breathed a silent prayer to Him I adore as my Saviour and King. Rising to leave the place, I was shocked and startled to notice, as I did then for the first time, armed Turkish Mohammedan soldiers standing to guard the place.

I will not longer linger to describe this town and church, except to remind you that when Christ was born this town had no room for Him in its ordinary shelters, so He was born in a stable. And after a life of holy living and noble deeds, generally believed to be about thirty-three years long, Jerusalem itself had no room for Him, but nailed Him to a cross, to its everlasting shame and disgrace. But Christ has had many birthplaces besides the stable at Bethlehem. He has come to poor human hearts, filled them with His gracious presence, and light, and love. He wants to be born in all of ours. Shall we let Him? Have we room for Him?

The River Jordan.

“How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”—JER. xii. 5.

THE day on which I first saw the River Jordan was full of interest and excitement. When the Arabs awoke me in the early morning by the noise they made at my tent door, I found myself at Marsaba, near to the famous convent which gives its name to the place. It is a wild weird district, and the monks, who exclude women from their society, never allowing one to pass the threshold, could not have selected a more suitable spot for the lonely life they live. We were in the saddle at 7.30, and started for our six hours' ride to the Jordan by way of the Dead Sea. Our ride was over what I should think is one of the worst roads in the world—if road at all it can be called. We passed along the edges of deep chasms, on the ridges and over the faces of lofty mountains, and up and down white slippery rocks, where English horses would be exhausted in an hour, but over all of which our Arab steeds carried us in perfect safety. But if the journey was rough, it was one of the most delightful that men need ever wish to travel. The valleys and hills were covered with millions of the loveliest wild flowers, which grew in the richest profusion in one continuous mingled mass, which covered the mountain sides as if with the rarest and richest of carpets.

The Dead Sea.

About noon we reached the northern end of the Dead Sea, and were greatly struck by the stillness of the place, though we looked in vain for the death and desolation we had been taught to expect. We remembered that out here were the Cities of the Plain, destroyed by fire and brimstone, because of their terrible wickedness. Here it was that Lot looked with selfish eyes upon the then fruitful, well-watered district, and chose to make his home there, whilst his uncle Abraham was left to move further on. Here it was that Lot's wife, clinging—woman-like—to her home, looked back and became a pillar of salt. Out yonder, in the far distance, stands the spot marked out as the prison of John the Baptist. Sitting at the head of this lake we notice that its waters were driven in by the wind, and rolled on the beach, just like the waters of any other lake we have ever seen. And when we plunged into it, expecting to swim like a cork, and to find it impossible to sink, we found in those respects that it was much like the waters of any other lake into which we have ever jumped. Other men may have found it so dense that they could not sink in it, and so buoyant that they could almost walk on its surface; but that was not my experience. I could walk in it, and did; I could sink in it, and, to my sorrow, did. I expected when I walked into it to feel as if I were walking into a bath of needles, but I didn't; I just felt as I always do when I enter the sea for a bath and a swim. Whatever others have experienced in its waters, the above is an accurate description of mine, the guide-books notwithstanding. Except that when I got my head under water, and some of it into my eyes and mouth, I did not notice any difference from any other bath in the sea. But when the water got into my mouth and eyes, I experienced

sensations the like of which I had never known before. And I ought to add that, for a day or two, I could feel my skin rough with the salt, though I could not see it. From the Dead Sea to the pilgrims' bathing-place in the Jordan is about an hour's ride across an extensive plain. It was curious to see the little mounds and patches of the plain white with the salt condensed from the spray and moisture of the Dead Sea. There was but little vegetation.

The River Jordan.

And now we have reached the Jordan, the most remarkable river on the face of the globe. It has been my good fortune to visit and see some of the great and historic rivers of the world. I have crossed and recrossed the Seine at Paris, and have walked by the side of the Arno at Florence. I have gazed upon the Tiber at Rome, and have seen the Hudson River of America. I have visited the Niagara in Canada, and have sailed on the noble St. Lawrence River. I have glided over the surface of the ancient Nile in Egypt, and have sat by the banks of the beautiful Abana at Damascus. But not any nor all of these gave such pleasure, nor awakened such gratitude and feeling of devotion, as my first sight of the Jordan. The Christian who for the first time stands by its banks, or walks into its waters, has kindled within him such emotions as the sight of no other river in the universe can awaken. How is this? It is not remarkable for its greatness. In this it is far excelled by our own old father Thames. For beauty it is not to be compared with the Abana. No great cities adorn its banks, nor is it made attractive by the beautiful residences of the rich. The commerce of nations is not carried on its bosom, as on our own muddy Mersey or Humber. Ships bearing the standards of the peoples never

navigate its waters, and yet it has a greater place in the affections of Christian men everywhere than all other rivers put together. Its sanctity lies in the fact that its waters have been made for ever sacred by the feet of Him who was by John declared to be the Lamb of God, and who was proclaimed by a voice from heaven to be the Son of God. Standing here, at this pilgrims' bathing-place, visited by tens of thousands of the devout of all lands, let us notice some of its Scriptural associations.

Jacob and Laban.

When Jacob had deceived his father, at the instigation of his mother, and thus obtained the blessing which belonged to his brother, he was obliged to flee from his home. Making his way toward his uncle Laban's, he crossed the Jordan, and perhaps at this very spot. I can see him in imagination, a fugitive, all his property consisting of a walking-stick. And in twenty-one years afterwards he again crossed this Jordan, not a poor and penniless wanderer, but a man of considerable property, with a large household, and he a much wiser and better man.

When the Almighty called His servant Moses home to rest, and when Joshua had taken command of the hosts of Israel, he was commanded to go forward to possess the Promised Land. But between them and the land they were to possess came this Jordan. But at the command of their leader they went forward. The priests, bearing the sacred Ark of the Covenant, came to the margin of the river. As soon as their feet touched the water a passage was made for the whole host, which passed over in safety. There, not far from the spot on which we stand, Joshua erected his memorial pillar of the twelve stones taken from the bed of the river.

When Absalom, the son of David, was in rebellion against his father, trying to grasp his sceptre and take his throne, the King made good his escape from Jerusalem. Ascending the Mount of Olives with bare feet, weeping as he went, he passed over the plains of Jericho and crossed the Jordan, perhaps at this very spot. Absalom and his rebellious men crossed over also.

Naaman the Leper.

When Naaman, the great Syrian soldier, came to Israel to seek a cure for his leprosy, the prophet of Israel sent him to dip in Jordan seven times. With wounded pride and injured vanity, we know how the hero of a hundred battles turned away in a rage, and despised the waters of the Jordan as he thought of the beauty of the rivers of his country. But when the common-sense of his servants prevailed with him, he determined at least to try the dipping. Driving¹ across the plain, he stood, perhaps where we stand, to prepare for entering the water. See him as he dips there time after time. But at the seventh dip the scales have gone, and the white leprous flesh becomes soft and clean as that of a little child, suggesting to us thoughts of the cleansing power of the atoning blood of the Lamb of God.

Elijah, the prophet of God, had his residence at Gilgal yonder, two hours' ride away. When the time drew near that he was to enter the chariot of fire, and march to the land of rest, accompanied by Elisha, his chosen successor, he started for the appointed place. Approaching this Jordan, the prophet rolled up his mantle and struck the waters, when a passage was found for him and his companion. And yonder, near to the opposite bank of this river, he ascended to heaven, first casting his mantle upon Elisha.

John and Jesus.

But these incidents from the Old Testament pale¹ before those of the New. It was here, at this Jordan, and, perhaps, at this very spot, that John the Baptist carried on his great work, when all Judea and Jerusalem came out to his ministry. It was here he baptized when the leaders of the people from Jerusalem came to inquire of him as to his mission. It was here that He came of whom John was but the forerunner to prepare the way. It was here He came at whose baptism the heavens opened, and² the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon Him. It was here that we got one of the evidences of the Three Persons in the Godhead—God the Father sending the Holy Spirit, and proclaiming Christ as the Son of God. Well may this river be sacred to Christian hearts; well may men long to see its banks, and bathe in its waters. There is not one of you who hears my voice but would like to go and see it.

It may never come to the lot of many to visit it. Your feet may never be washed by its waters. But the name of the river, and the text we read at the beginning, tell us of another river we all must cross. Every soul must approach the river which divides this world from the next. How will you do it? How shall we all face that? If we have plunged by faith into the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, we need not fear to face the swelling Jordan, because the Rock of Ages will be beneath our feet.

Jericho.

“The wall fell down flat.”—JOSH. vi. 20.

THE Jericho of Joshua's time was a strong and important city. It was one of the oldest of the land, and was the first which Joshua had to conquer when he entered Palestine. It seems to have been fortified by massive walls, so thick that residences could be built upon them, for we read that Rahab, who protected the spies, had her house upon them. And we may conclude that the city was possessed of considerable wealth, for one soldier in Joshua's army was able to seize a large wedge of gold, 200 shekels of silver, and a costly and beautiful Babylonish garment; whilst Joshua greatly enriched the treasury of the Lord by the abundance of silver, gold, and valuable metal utensils which he took from the wreck of the city.

The Jericho of the Saviour's time was a place of some importance, rather large population, and probably of considerable wealth. The two are not exactly the same; but the site of the ancient and the more modern are so close that we may for our purposes in this address regard the two as practically one. There are three things to be noticed:—

I. THE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF JERICHO.

It lies at the western side of a great and extensive plain, once rich and fertile, and on the eastern side of which is the River Jordan. In miles it is about six distant from the river, and probably about twenty-two from Jerusalem. It

is under the shadow of a range of mountains, now bleak and bare and uninviting. One of these mountains, rising to a considerable height, with its bleak and fierce-looking side toward the plain, is called the *Quarantania*. Tradition says that this is the scene of the Temptation, in which the Saviour had that fierce struggle with the powers of evil, whose descriptions have so perplexed the readers of the Gospels. What truth there may be in the tradition which fixes this as the site we do not know, but we do not for a moment hesitate to say that the mountain looks savage and wild enough to have been the actual spot.

Any one who visits Jericho now will look in vain for the "City of Palm Trees" of the ancient world. And if he expects to find a town such as Christ saw he will be disappointed. Located in one of the most fertile plains, with an abundance of water from Elijah's spring and the brook Cherith, it is at once one of the poorest, dirtiest, and most disreputable places in the whole land, from Dan to Beersheba. The hovels in which the few wretched inhabitants live cannot be called houses. Holes in the earth, walls of mud, roofs of rushes, comprise the places in which men, women, and children exist together. The ordinary pigsty of England is clean, comfortable, and preferable to the places we saw there.

The inhabitants have a bad reputation. They never steal anything which is beyond their reach, and seldom fail to take what is! Making my way along the narrow filthy path, a girl, perhaps seven years old, tried to steal my pocket-handkerchief from the side pocket of a short coat I wore at the time.

II. THE BIBLICAL ASSOCIATIONS OF JERICHO.

The Biblical associations of Jericho are very numerous, and not less important, suggestive, and interesting. When

Joshua crossed the Jordan as leader of the Lord's hosts, this was the first city which opposed his progress. It was in sight of its strongholds he pitched the tents of Israel. It was around its walls he and his people marched day after day until the seventh, when, in the midst of a great shout, the walls fell down flat. It was here that he and his people celebrated the first Passover feast ever held in the land.

During the sojourn of the people in the wilderness, on the other side the Jordan, and on this side, until they reached Jericho, God miraculously fed them with manna from heaven. It was here at Jericho that they first ate of the old corn of the land. The manna, that bread made in the heavens by celestial fingers, and which had sustained their host for so long a time, ceased when they came to this place. In presence of the cornfields and threshing-floors they no longer needed special food for special emergencies, so God ceased to send it.

It was here at Jericho that woman called Rahab lived who hid the spies, and who was saved by Joshua when the city fell, and who, according to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, was saved by faith. She has a bad reputation, which might be modified somewhat if we knew more of the times in which she lived. But, bad or good, we know that she married Salmon, who was of the children of the princes of Judah, became the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth, and was thus one of the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Elijah, the prophet of Israel, that man of force and vigour, had his residence here, and perhaps had a theological college for training young men for the office of the ministry of God. He left this place to cross the Jordan yonder, six miles away, when he was about to enter his chariot of fire and pass into the land beyond.

Our Saviour Himself visited this city, left in it traces of His Divine power in the miracles He wrought. Two, if not three, blind men here had their eyes opened by Christ Jesus the Lord. One of these was Bartimæus, a beggar, who seems to have had a true conception of the person and rank of Christ, for he addressed him as "Son of David," and had such faith in him that all the efforts of the crowd to silence him proved of no avail.

It was here at Jericho that remarkable man Zacchæus mounted the tree by the wayside, that he might get a sight of the passing Christ. But, to his amazement, he discovered that Christ was not in any particular haste to get by, even though there was a despised publican in the tree. Calling the man by name, as if He knew him well after a long acquaintance, He declared His intention of accepting hospitality at the house of the hated tax-gatherer. These are some of the Biblical associations of this historic city, whose walls fell down flat at the shout of Joshua's men.

III. THE LESSON WHICH THE INCIDENT OF THE TEXT HAS TO TEACH US.

Assuming that you remember the narrative as here recorded, we may observe that it suggests—

1. *That God can use the feeblest instrumentalities to accomplish His purposes.*

When the people shouted, the walls of the city fell down flat. Not a single battering-ram was used upon the walls; not one weapon of ordinary warfare brought into use; not a single arrow shot at any sentinel; not a stone hurled into the city. They marched round it again and again, and then, as the ram's horns at the lips of the priests sounded forth, all the people shouted, and down came the defences of Jericho. If ever feeble instrumentalities were

used, surely it was now. How the inhabitants of the city must have smiled when they saw this people marching! But they kept on marching. In silence, in order, in faith, they march round and round. And when the instrument which sounded the signal was blown, it was not the silver trumpet of the priests, but the common ram's horn.

Feeble instrumentalities! God has often worked that way, and does so still. You remember proud Naaman! Covered with honours, he came to this very place, ancient Gilgal, to the door of the house of Elisha to seek a cure for his leprosy. How came he to know of the prophet of the Lord? How came he, this soldier, to bow himself in reverence and with deepest gratitude to the servant of God? It was all brought about, in the providence of God, through a little captive slave-girl carried from her home in one of the wars of Naaman; a little girl who had been taught to honour God and His prophet, and did not forget to do so when far away and among strangers. It was a feeble instrumentality, but God used it.

Many a time He has used the little girl, the little child, to bring men to acknowledge Him. What happened when the little child was born into your home? In the first place, it became the anchor which held the mother to her home as never before. But it did more than this. It was the connecting-link which bound together father and mother, husband and wife, in a closer bond of affection and oneness than the marriage ring. The ring was the beginning of the union, the coming of that little child was the completion of the union. Nay, it did more than this even. Impressed by the fact that the little one would look to you for guidance in matters of the soul and the better life, were you not forced to think how you had neglected such matters yourself, and for the child's sake, as well as your own, you were driven to the Cross to seek

salvation? Such things have often happened and we trust they may again.

The Cross of Calvary was a feeble instrumentality. It was foolishness to the Greeks, whilst it became a stumbling-block to the Jews. And yet that was God's appointed way of saving a lost world. The Cross is slowly but surely attracting men to itself, and it becomes the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. The preaching of a crucified and risen and glorified Saviour has often been regarded as a feeble thing. And yet, by the foolishness of preaching, God has won for Himself many thousands of the bravest and noblest champions of His cause. As we see the walls of Jericho fall down, and as we read the experience of God's saints in all ages, and think of our own, we may indeed exclaim, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

2. *In the next place we learn that God wants all instrumentalities to fight against the forces of sin.*

Look at verse 9. It shows us that all the hosts of God were in that procession. First came the armed men, the soldiers who had received such training as could be given them, men who were prepared to fight with skill, courage, and strength. They went first in this seven-days' march. Then came the priests, the ministers of God, whose business it was to deal with holy things. They were in this procession too. Seven of them, carrying trumpets made from the horns of rams, headed the priestly procession, whilst the rest of the priests came and protected the Ark of the Covenant of God. After the priests came the rereward. Who were they? They were not armed men, nor did they fill the priestly office, but followed up and sustained those who did. They were the people—loyal, patient, true, and

full of faith, and if their place was in the rear, they filled it and did their duty like men.

That is just as it should be in all God's conflict against sin. God wants all, and the battle needs all. Armed strong men—men of courage, confidence, faith—let these pass on in front. Let them lead us in the battle. Priests, ministers, teachers—let them fall into line. And then the rereward—the people. God wants all! He wants you, and the cause needs you. Do you say you can't carry arms? You are timid, and possess but little or no strength? What of that? There is a place for you; see that you fill it. You can sustain and encourage those who are in front, and you will best do this by filling your place in the ranks. Do you say you can't preach? Do you tell us that it is impossible for you to take the pulpit or mount the platform, and address your fellows in eloquent words? You can support and pray for those whom God has called to blow the ram's horn and bear the solemn and sacred Ark of the Covenant of the Gospel. It was Moses who pleaded with God on the mount while Israel fought with Amalek. But Aaron and Hur held up his hands. And God wants you. You can march, you can share the conflict; God has a place for you. Oh, brethren, never suppose it is enough to attend church and sing hymns. God wants more of you than this. It is cruel to give your threepenny-bit in the collection, pay for your seat-rent, and give nothing else. Give yourselves, your service, your prayers, your sympathies. The Church needs every one of her sons and daughters if she is to bring down the walls of Jericho. The devil's kingdom is strong, rich, proud, and powerful. It is entrenched behind the wicked example of those in high places, and strengthened often by the doings of the princes of the earth. But the walls of this kingdom must come down. Privilege, monopoly, sin will have to fall. God has

decreed their destruction, and calls for you, for all of us, to help in the conflict. There is a place for us; let us to a man seek loyally, lovingly, and faithfully to fill that place, and may the Lord of Hosts be with us, and make us a blessing.

Reform at Home.

“Throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it.”—JUDG. vi. 25.

IN Jerusalem every man sweeps before his own door—at least it is said that he does. If he doesn't, I doubt if any one else does it for him. Here in London the same thing was required of us until a very recent date. If a fall of snow came say before January 1892, every man was required by law to sweep in front of his own door, and in the sweeping he was to go as far as the outer edge of the footpath; so that what we know as a proverb in relation to Jerusalem we have practised as a fact in relation to London.

But I suppose that most of you will at once understand that the Jerusalem door-front sweeping is only another way of saying that all reform should begin at home; and used in that sense the saying is expressive and suggestive.

It is in this sense that I use the text of this morning. God was calling Gideon to service for His people. He was the chosen instrument by means of which the Almighty intended to defeat the Midianitish hordes which overran the plains, plundered the Israelites of their goods, robbed them of their growing crops, and made them hide in dens and caves for fear. Gideon was to do good service for God and for the people. The Lord's hand was laid upon him, and he was to come out of his hiding-place, and for a while live in the light, lead the people, win victories,

and bring deliverance. But, as I understand the text, he was to begin his reforms at home. Idolatry had crept in among the people. Gideon's own father was among those who had set up altars to Baal, and erected carved wooden images for worship. A blow must first be struck at this sin. "Break down the altar of Baal that thy father hath," said the angel to Gideon; "sweep away the rubbish from thine own door front. Turn out the uncleanness from thy dwelling. Let the festering cankering sore that is in thine own family be cut out. Put in the knife, cut deep, have no mercy. Down with the altar, out with the idols, and let thy reforming work begin at home."

This is the brief exposition I wished to give of the text, and it furnishes me with the subject of *Reform at Home*. It is a subject of wide application. I use it now in a threefold application, as it applies to *nations, to churches, and to individuals*.

I. REFORM AT HOME SHOULD BE PREACHED TO NATIONS.

These are days of rapid travel and national interchange. We visit all the world, and all the world visits us. The insularity of Englishmen is a thing of the past. It is no longer possible to say that every Briton, like the land on which he lives, is an island, cut off from his fellows by a sea of differences. Indeed it will not long be possible to speak of the insularity of our country, for we have already had proposals to connect it with the Continent by means of a tunnel under the sea and a bridge over it. All this interchange enables us to see the excellences and the defects in our neighbours; and I do not think that Englishmen have been slow to speak of the faults of others.

But it may be well for us as a people to look a little more at home. Rejoicing as I do in the greatness, and

the goodness, and the superiority of my country over any other in the world, I am not blind to the fact that we have room for reform at home. If the angel of God came to us as he came to Gideon, I have a suspicion that he would say, "Break down the altar, turn out the idols, heal your own diseases, sweep before your own door, and reform your own abuses and inconsistencies."

We send our missionaries to convert the heathen from their darkness and superstitions, and it is good that we should. It is at our peril that we neglect to obey the Saviour's command to preach the Gospel in all the world. Believing as we do that Jesus Christ died for all men, it is laid upon us as a solemn duty to let all men know of it. But how can they know if those who love Jesus Christ withhold from them the blessed light which has shined into their own hearts? We send our missionaries to convert the heathen, but what else do we send them? We send them our ardent spirits, our rum fiend, which undoes the good work the men of God succeed in doing. The same ships which carry our missionaries are laden with the demon drink, which some one has called distilled damnation, and which the natives call fire-water. I feel like saying, before you send any more missionaries, sweep your own door-step, clean your own house.

England has spent tens of thousands of pounds in a crusade against the use of opium in China. Good men and women in increasing numbers are devoting themselves to this cause, which I think to be humane and necessary, and which I trust our Father may bless; for if half the stories told us of the mischief which it brings be true, it is indeed doing a deadly work.

But may not an intelligent Chinaman say to us, "Before you come preaching to us about opium, hadn't you better go and stop the wicked work which the drink traffic is

doing in your own country? It is, according to the testimony of those among you who are best able to judge, the most fruitful parent of vice, crime, poverty, pauperism, and irreligion known in the world. Stop that in your own midst and then come to us. Stop the traffic which sends sixty thousand of your people to the grave every year long before their time, and which brings untold misery to tens of thousands beside."

If the Chinaman said that, what could we answer? He would have an argument in presence of which we should be condemned, silent, speechless, guilty. And if the angel of the Lord came he would tell us in a most peremptory fashion to dethrone the drink, to break down the altar, turn out the idol, and begin our reforms at home.

I suppose it is true to say that to-day the Gospel of Christ will be preached in forty thousand pulpits in this kingdom. The ministers will tell of the goodness and love of God, and will urge us all to be pure and good and keep ourselves from evil. And yet to-day, this Sunday, the day set apart as a day of rest for the body and for the worship of God, I know not how many thousands of public-houses stand wide open with their glaring lights, their shining glasses, and gilded bars. There they are, open on this day to rob the pulpit of its fruit, to undo the work of the Sunday-school, to ruin the life and character of our people. Isn't it time that we began to sweep before our own doors?

I tell you this is of wide application indeed. We have ridiculed the Continental Sunday, and spoken in terms of disgust of that which it practises on that day, but hadn't we better look at home? We allow our shops to be open, newspapers are cried in our streets, we run excursion trains, and have our peace disturbed by the cries of water-cress and winkles.

We have sent our ships into many waters, and our soldiers into many lands, to put down slavery; we have

spent much in blood and treasure in this direction ; but if the angel came to us as he did to Gideon, wouldn't he rebuke us for the slavery in our midst ? If a tenth part of what we hear about the sweater be true, of poor women making clothes for the army, and I know not what beside, at a price on which they cannot live, isn't it time we swept in front of our own door ? If it be true that there are companies which pay dividends of fifteen and twenty per cent. to their shareholders, and underpay their work-people, we should try to put a stop to that before we send any more ships to stop the selling of black men. White slavery is as wicked as black, in whatever form it exists. But I must pass on to notice my second part.

II. REFORM AT HOME SHOULD BE PREACHED TO CHURCHES.

I think there is much need for reform in the Church, more than we sometimes imagine. There is a good deal of coldness, formality, and want of vigour, which do more harm than some suppose. We have acres of empty seats in many places, and we wonder why. We express our astonishment that the people don't come. Who is to blame ? Where is the reform needed ?—outside the Church among the people, or inside the Church among its members ? Are the Churches faultless and the people all hopelessly bad ? Where is the weakness ?

Any student of the times who knows anything of the people will be ready to admit that there is much room for improvement among them. They are far from that state of goodness which most of us long to see ; but that they are all hopelessly bad is an absurd thing to say. And to assume that because multitudes do not attend any of our churches they are Atheists, is as mischievous as it is wicked. Any such assumption would be as foolish and false as to say that the Church is faultless.

We want revivals among the people which shall save them. Then the Church must be revived. We desire to lead the masses to Christ, that they may feel the warm glow of His love, and know the joy of His service. Then the Church must get nearer Christ. We must put out of the Church everything contrary to the spirit of Him whose name it bears. The churches must be warm, generous, and large-hearted, and this should apply both to pulpit and pew. The pulpit is not always as broad and sympathetic as might be. Many years ago I had to preach on Sunday in a beautiful church. It was costly and grand. The congregation was what would be called rather select. Whatever good quality there was in the congregation that night, it could hardly be said that it was in the quantity. When I got into the pulpit I had a sense of greater discomfort than I had known in the pulpit for many years. It was about the smallest I had ever stood in. Accustomed to a wide platform, that little pulpit made me feel like a bird in the smallest of cages. It was little, narrow, cramped. The regular occupant of that pulpit was a warm-hearted, genial, godly man. But it is a misfortune when the man in the pulpit is narrow, cold, cramped, and chilling. A cold man will not well warm others. He has a very chilling effect. There is just a danger that sometimes the message we have to deliver may suffer through our want of warmth. It is a pity if ever we create the impression in the minds of our hearers that, if we believed all the good things we say, we should be more enthusiastic about them. I think there is a good deal of room for reform at the pulpit.

But the pulpit is only part of the church. And though it fills a large share in the arrangements of public worship, it requires the pew as well as the pulpit to make the whole. And there is a good deal of room for reform in the pew. Cold men in the pews create cold men in the pulpit. When the large new church building in which I carry on my

ministry was completed and almost ready for opening, an interesting little incident happened. My church-secretary and I went into the building to look round. He was anxious to place a thermometer somewhere in a convenient spot. After we had looked round and noticed several places, he said to me, "I think the pulpit will be the best place in which to put it." Though he is a Scotchman, I do not for one moment think he meant any joke, though we both laughed heartily at the proposal when it had slipped out. Men are apt to blame the pulpit for whatever may be wrong in the church. They forget that after all the pulpit is often a thermometer which indicates the spiritual condition of the church. Let there be warmth and love in the pews, and the pulpit will warm up. But if icebergs be in the pews you will get marble in the pulpit, and seeking souls will be warned off by the chills which will be as cutting as the East wind.

On this point I may tell you of an old incident which fits in well. A church which was without pastor sought to induce the minister of a popular crowded church to accept their call. A deputation was appointed to wait upon him, and did. He was told of the large scope for work, of the crowded district, of the great good he could do. He listened to their story, promised to consider their call, and prayed hard and long about it. At length he wrote to accept the call, and finally went and settled. The deacons and other officers were full of joy. Now, said they, our empty pews will be filled, our collection will go up, our seat-rent fund will increase, our congregation will increase and become as great as that which we saw crowding the building in which our new pastor has carried on his ministry. But the great crowd of people did not come, nor was there the great increase in funds which some had expected. The new minister failed to take hold as he had done in the

other place. The deacons met privately to consider the state of affairs, and decide what to do. They met, conferred, complained, and expressed their great disappointment, and considered their pastor a failure in this sphere. At length it was agreed to send a deputation to the minister to talk the matter over with him, and to put before him the result of their conference, and see if he had any suggestion to make. The deputation went and told its story to the pastor. The good man listened to all they had to say, and then had his turn. "Yes," he said, "it is true enough that I have not been as successful in laying hold of the people here as I was in my last place. But there is an obvious reason for it. When I came here unfortunately I left my prayer-book behind me, and I find it impossible to get on without it." As sturdy Nonconformists they were at a loss to know what he meant by a prayer-book, and asked him to explain. "I will do so at once," said he, "and in a few sentences. When I was at my last church I had a warm-hearted, loyal, loving, praying people, and the work of the ministry was blessed, and I succeeded. Unfortunately when I came to you I left that praying church behind me, and did not find one like it among you. The spirit of prayer is not with us. We are cold, hard, and unsympathetic. We are not a praying people, and we shall never get on until we are. That is what I mean by my prayer-book. Give me such a prayer-book here, and God will bless our efforts."

Reform should be begun at home. The Church should be full of the spirit of prayer, of love, of brotherhood. And if we preach these things to others, they may well say to some of our churches, Hadn't you better look at home. Cleanse your own home, and then come and talk to us. I feel sometimes that all our churches are far below what they ought to be. I rejoice with a joy I

cannot tell at all the good which the Church of Christ has accomplished in the world. Many of the blessings which men enjoy have been secured through the work of the Church, though the credit has not always come to it. And yet I am afraid that we have so managed some of our churches, that if the Lord Himself came back to earth in human form, and entered some of them, He would find it hard to see His own likeness in them.

Let us lay this to heart, so far as it may have any application to us, and let us keep our own home in order, and sweep before our own door. Our Master took whips to drive out of the Temple the money-changers, the buyers, and the sellers, and those who defiled His Father's house. It behoves us to break down every false altar, to put away every idol, and make God's temple holy.

III. REFORM AT HOME SHOULD BE PREACHED TO INDIVIDUALS.

All reform should begin at self. We can only mend the universe as we mend its units. We want the nation better, then we must mend its men. We desire to see the Church of God pure and holy, then its members must be holy. There is no other way of which I know, and therefore I preach this. When Christ had cast the evil spirits out of the Gadarene, and restored the man to his right mind, a remarkable thing happened. The man came to Christ and besought Him to let him abide at the Saviour's side—he fancied that there he would be safe. But though the request seems a good one, Christ did not grant it. Instead, He said to the man, "Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee." The man had received a blessing, and he was to let it be seen at home, so that, perchance, his personal change might lead to theirs.

And so it must be all along. The individual man must

be blessed, and then he must seek to help some other. It all begins at home. The nation is made up of communities, and the purity of its life cannot rise above the best average of the life of its communities. Then the communities are comprised of homes. The homes are made up of individuals. If we mend the individuals, we mend the whole. The Church in its collective capacity will be strong when the units which compose it are strong.

Then what is the application of all this? It is very simple and very plain. It is just this, we must each begin our reforming at home. Let us break down every altar, and eject every idol, and let the Lord of life, who has a right to rule ours, enter into possession of us. This is well expressed in a popular hymn:—

“Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole,
I want Thee for ever to live in my soul;
Break down every idol, cast out every foe—
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Lord Jesus, look down from Thy throne in the skies,
And help me to make a complete sacrifice;
I give up myself and whatever I know—
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

It would be difficult for me to put the matter in a more forcible form; and so, I say, consider well the teaching of these lines. You who are God's, but have grown cold and indifferent, and have allowed something to come between you and God, get back to the Cross, get back to the Saviour, and let Him get back to you.

And to you who are not God's by adoption, I have to say the same. Get to the Cross! Get to the open Fountain! Get to Jesus Christ, your Saviour and mine, and you shall walk in the light of His face, and know the mystery of the peace of God.

Religion judged by its Results.

“If he be a god, let him plead for himself.”—JUDG. vi. 31.

I WANT to take you to a town in Central Palestine. Its name is Ophrah, and it is perhaps not far from Shechem, the place where Gideon lived. It is early morning as we arrive. The sun shines down gloriously, filling all the vales with his light, and making the wild flowers of the hills blaze with beauty.

There is great excitement in the city ; all the people are in a state of uproar. During the still hours of the night a great act of sacrilege has been committed. While men peacefully slept, protected as they believed by the power of their gods, some one has had the audacity and daring to enter the sacred enclosure, demolish the altar of Baal, and break and cast out the wooden gods of the people. And now in the early morning, when the people rose, they found their cathedral, their church, their chapel, their sacred altar, or whatever else we like to call it, in ruins. It is a slight upon them all, and an insult to their god, and an offence which they cannot pass lightly over. Hence their excitement.

Their God was killed.

If these men believed in their idols, we cannot wonder that they were excited. When their god was killed, it seems natural that they should be up in arms against the man who was guilty, and seek to bring him to justice.

But what a low ebb religion has reached among any people when its god can be broken and destroyed ! Perhaps we are not able to express a correct judgment upon an idolatrous people, living as we do in a Christian land, under Christian institutions, and in the midst of the blessings of the Christian religion. But we are disposed to express our astonishment that any people could bring itself to worship a god which would allow itself to be killed. Our wonder is not lessened when we think of the folly of this people, the descendants of Moses and those who surrounded him. And yet we should be somewhat careful in our judgments upon this ancient people, lest one of the spirits of the people should rise up to condemn the heathenism and godlessness, as well as the idolatry, of these our days.

Let him defend himself.

When the people discovered that Gideon was the guilty party, that he had done this act of desecration, they clamoured loud and long to have him brought out. Let him die for his presumption, and suffer for his sin. He is not fit to live. The man that breaks the altar of Baal, and ruins and destroys the images by the altar, shall have no mercy. So the people clamoured to Gideon's father to bring out his son that they might slay him. But Gideon's father made an answer which deserves more than passing notice. With irony which must have cut the people to the quick, he said, " If Baal be a god, let him plead for himself. Surly, if he be what you say and believe, he can defend himself against the actions of a man. There has been an attack upon the god by a mortal man. The god ought to be able to take care of himself. Let us judge between the parties by the result."

Religion judged by Results.

When we hear a speech like that, we are inclined to shout, "Hear, hear." Surely it seems reasonable. Surely no one could object to that. Let religion be judged by its results. Do not attempt to argue to defend it; it surely does not need that. Christianity has had eighteen hundred years of trial now, and it is too late to attempt to defend it by mere words. Look at what it has done. If its works do not prove it to be of God, if it has not stood the test of time, if its results are not sufficient to defend it, no words of ours will. Let this test be applied to it with vigour. You cannot, surely, object to that. This is an age when men have not much reverence for old systems because they are old. Everything is put to the test. Utility is the standard of most men now. Payment by results is the order of the day; and you are beginning to apply this test to the pulpit as well as to many other things. Very well, apply your test—we are willing.

The Bible asks for this Test.

If you know your Bibles, you will recollect that both Old and New Testaments claim this test. When Elijah stood alone for God at Carmel, in the presence of the king and the court and the false prophets, he challenged them all to a judgment by results. Though single-handed, he did not fear. Though a host was against him, he was not dismayed. Though he knew in his heart, when he challenged the people to test by results, that failure on his side meant certain death, he was not intimidated. The god that answereth by fire, "let him be the God." And when the people refused to believe in our Saviour, rejected His teaching, and would not acknowledge Him as their Saviour, He appealed to them on the ground of results:

"Though ye believe not Me, believe the works," said Christ, in John x. 38; "Believe Me for the very works' sake," said He again, John xiv. 11. And we know from the Acts of the Apostles that when the rulers hated the disciples, and wished to silence them, and stamp out Christianity at its very beginning, they were forced to admit its power. When the lame man was cured, a stir was made, you will recollect. We are told that when they saw the man who had been healed, they were not able to say anything against it. Our Lord said the tree is known by its fruits.

What has Christianity done?

If, then, we say, Judge our religion by its works—the tree by its fruits, you ask, Well, what has it done? And when this question is put, whole continents stand up to bear witness to the power and saving might of Jesus Christ. Whole peoples, who have come out of Paganism and heathen darkness, say, Look at us. We are what we are by Christ Jesus the Lord. What has Christianity done? It has filled dark places of the earth with light. It has knocked off the fetters from millions of slaves, and made men feel that freedom is the birthright of every man, and that no human being, black or white, should be the property of another. It has covered the world with its beneficent light and healing. It has erected the countless hospitals, infirmaries, asylums, and orphanages. It has sent help to the poor, hope to the despairing, comfort to the sad, salvation to the sinful, and restored fallen man to his reconciled God. Time would fail to tell of the beneficent work of Christ.

"Blessings abound where'er He reigns:
The pris'ner leaps to loose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest."

“Where He displays His healing power,
 Death and the curse are known no more ;
 In Him the tribes of Adam boast
 More blessings than their father lost.”

Christianity played out.

And yet they say Christianity is played out ; it has had its day ; it is a thing of the past ; it is out of date now, and has lost touch with the present ; it did well enough in the past, but won't do for us now.

Played out, is it ? Indeed ! And who says so, pray ? But never mind who says so. Men have said that before. They have decreed its destruction long ago. Those who talked so tall about it being forgotten have gone, but Christianity is still here. The living loving Christ is with us, and we know Him better and love Him more to-day than ever we did. And when those who now talk so tall about the failures of Christianity are forgotten, it will still be spreading its healing light and blessing.

What will you put in its Place ?

But let us suppose for a moment that we listen to those who would take Christ and His religion out of the world, we ask them what will you put in place of these ? What have you to offer us ? Before I give up the old I want to see the new. I can't afford to cast away my old coat until I see some chance of getting a new one. I am not prepared to part with my home until I see a reasonable prospect of a better. I do not want to leave old England for any other land in the world until I feel that I shall be better and happier and more useful in the other country than I am in this. I do not care to part with my friends, tried and trusted through many years of sunshine and

showers, until I see that my confidence in them was misplaced, and I see some prospect of better ones than they have been. I am not disposed to give up a religion which has done so much for me, and which gives me such peace, hope, joy, and prospects for the future, until I can find a better. So I say let us see what you have to give us?

Let us see your God.

Bring out your god, let us have a look at him. It will be interesting to see what he is like. We should like to know what he has done. We want to apply our test of results to him. We challenge you on this ground. A meeting was once held at which a number of very clever people set themselves the task of opposing Christianity and slighting God. When the speaking was over, criticism and questions were asked for. After a short pause an old woman rose up on the floor of the meeting-place and began to speak. People shouted, "Platform, platform! go on to the platform." In a shrill voice which rang through the building, she is said to have replied as follows: "I shan't go to the platform; there is quite enough old women up there already without me going to make another." It was some time before the laugh had passed, but when it did she said, "These men have been opposing religion and almost laughing at God. I want to ask what they can give me instead of what I have? I was left a widow with six children, not one of whom could work. I rested upon the promise of God, who says He is a husband to the widow and a father to the fatherless, and I have found His word to be true. For, though I have hard struggle, not one of my six children or myself ever wanted a bit of bread. I have brought them all up, and now I am just waiting till God thinks fit to take me home to rest. Will

these men up there tell me what could have done better for me than my loving God has done?" It was an old woman's argument, but as it was one of experience it was powerful. I put her question.

What has Infidelity done?

It would be interesting to see what infidelity has done for man. Point us to the buildings it has set up in which to care for the unfortunate, the sick, and the poor. Let us see the lame men which it has put on to their feet and made whole again. Where are the miserable homes it has made bright with a love and joy which equals, not to say excels, that of the Christian home? Where are the broken hearts it has healed and saved? We should like to see all the ignorant it has taken in hand and trained, the hungry it has fed, the sick it has cured. Until we can see something of its results we shall not be disposed to part with the religion which has lifted us into the higher regions of life and hope.

Christianity reconstructs.

We know too much of the blessings which result from Christianity ever to be persuaded to give it up. We have seen it reconstruct, remake men. It is said that now science has invented a way of dealing with the waste slag which comes from the iron furnaces which used to be thrown away in heaps as worthless. I have seen somewhere various useful articles, vases and others, made from the slag—waste, worthless materials worked up into articles of use and beauty. That is just what Christ does. He takes men who are cast off by the world as worthless and waste, and remakes them. The one at Gadara was not the only man out of whom Jesus cast the evil spirits and sent the

man home saved, blessed, and in his right mind. He took Bunyan, the blackguard tinker of Bedford, and made him a saint of God. He still takes men to Himself, saves and blesses them. Do not we know His saving power? Were not we far off in the wilderness? Were not we deep down in sin and shame? He has put us on a rock with new songs in our mouths and new hopes in our hearts. We know in whom we have believed.

Christianity still a Living Force.

“Played out!” did some one say? Nay, Christianity is still the greatest living force in the world. All that is highest, noblest, best among us has its rise in Christ. The brotherhood of man, the fatherhood of God are revealed to us in Him and by no other, except as they have learned of Him. Contrast the nations which have Christianity with those which know not Christ, and you will see His power and might. Judged by results it is seen that Christianity has saved whole nations, and we think is destined to save the world.

It helps Men to live and die.

We know how it has helped us to live, and we have seen how it helps men to die. The promises it has for all who accept it make a soft pillow for the aching head. Its hopes take us far beyond the confines of time. When Jesus Christ kindles the fire of His love on the altar of the human heart, the flames burn with immortal glory. In our hours of need what have those to give who oppose our Christ? Let us see. A woman, one of that school, lay ill and was passing away, and she knew it. She was visited by those of her set among whom she had lived. After some conversation with her, one of them said, “Hold

on to the end. Be true. Be brave. Hold on." Raising her thin hands, she said, "Yes, I want to hold on; but will you tell me *what I am to hold on to?*"

Yes, that is the point. What is there to hold on to away from Jesus Christ? We have seen the departing Christian both in tumult, tempest, and calm. In all these they have faced death as only men can who see Jesus Christ. At the rack, the stake, in prison, everywhere Christ has been with His own.

Shall we not then cling to Christ, who has done so much for the world, is doing so much, and is destined to do more? Shall we surrender a faith which has served us? Shall we turn our backs upon a Christ who has been our joy and hope? We have but one answer. We find it in the words of Joshua: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." We close with the words of the hymn many of us learned in childhood—

"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comforts when we die."

The Sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.

"The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon."—JUDG. vii. 20.

A COMPANY of English soldiers were in disgrace. Through some bad conduct they had for a while lost their colours, and were in trouble about it. It so happened that these men had to take part in some battle where a piece of hard fighting had to be done. One morning the men were in line. Some distance away was a hill held by the enemy which it was extremely important that the English should secure. The commander addressed his men and urged them on to the conflict which was soon to take place. He finished his brief address to them by saying, "Men, your colours are on the top of yonder hill." It was enough. Their souls were fired, and long before the day was out they had dislodged the enemy, secured the hill, wiped out the disgrace in which they had been, and won back their lost regimental colours by their bravery that day.

At the time our text was first spoken, Israel was in disgrace, in poverty, in bondage, in distress, and in danger. They had been made the tributaries of a foreign foe. This foe had quartered itself upon the Israelites, and for a long time past the Lord's people had been in poverty and pain. Their growing crops had been consumed, and many of the people had been obliged to hide in dens and caves, and get their food as best they could.

But the time has come to alter this. God Himself has taken up His people's cause. Appearing to Gideon He

has called and commanded him to strike a blow for the liberties of His people, and for their right to live untroubled by the thievish Midianites, who have been their oppressors. At the time our history finds them, the hosts are preparing for the conflict. The Midianites and their allies lay in the valley so numerous that the historian finds his arithmetic at fault, and so, instead of telling us in figures how many there are of them, he says they "lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude."

Gideon has sounded the bugle of war, which has summoned the thousands of Israel to his standard. But as God intends to glorify Himself in saving His people, the ranks of Gideon are thinned, and twenty-two thousand are sent back home. And after another test has been applied, Gideon finds himself with but three hundred men. These he arms, not with deadly weapons as swords and spears, but in one hand each man carries a trumpet, and in the other a pitcher, with a flaming torch inside it. Then in the stillness of the night he drew up his men and addressed them in brave and encouraging words. All his speech is not recorded, but it is quite likely that he urged them to stand for freedom, for fatherland, and for God. Then said he, "What you see me do, that do ye." They obeyed orders, and went to work to wipe out the disgrace which had come on their land. The silence of night was broken by the shrill blast of three hundred trumpets, and the smashing of three hundred pitchers made a crashing noise which struck terror and dismay into the hearts of the half-wakened Midianites. Rising hastily from sleep, every man seized his weapon, and in the terror and confusion set upon his neighbour. Death and destruction fell upon many of them, whilst the rest made off as best they could, pursued by the shouts of three hundred lusty men, who

cried as with one voice of thunder, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Such in brief is a popular exposition of the passage of history from which this text is taken. I do not want further to pursue the narrative, but it shall suggest for us a few lessons which may be of practical use to us in our conflict. We are engaged in warfare; but it is not on a mission of killing men that the Church of God is engaged to-day, nor are our weapons carnal; still they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. The Church of God is engaged in war against the hosts of the world, and every member of God's Church has to take his share in the conflict, and must seek to remove the enemies of God. Ours then is a conflict between God and the devil, between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, between truth and error, and between life and death. If we notice how Gideon and his men carried on their work for God, we may perhaps learn a few things which we may also practise with some profit.

I. WE WILL FIRST NOTICE THEIR UNITY.

Gideon's band was a small one. He cut it down until at last it only numbered three hundred. But that small band was a united company. There were no divisions, no quarrels, no mutinies among them. They stood as they were ordered to stand. With unbroken unity they grasped their trumpets and pitchers, and made ready at the word of command; and their united efforts, blessed by the Lord of Hosts, whose servants they were, brought complete victory.

Does not this speak to us and with a loud voice? Have the hundreds of God's hosts to-day that spirit of unity which should mark all the soldiers of the Cross? Have we all always obeyed orders from headquarters? Alas! it is

a sorry history which the Church of Christ has written. It has been such that outsiders have looked at us and said, "How these Christians do hate each other." Angry strifes have sprung up, which have not added to our peace and welfare. The Church of God has been torn and rent and split into parties and factions. And these parties have been as opposed to each other as if they all alike were destitute of the true spirit of their Master. Striving rather for their own particular views than for the honour of God and the glory of Christ, men in the Church have resorted to the methods of the world. They have imprisoned each other, inflicted fines and punishments almost without end. And all this has hindered the success of the work of the Church.

If the soldiers in the ranks of the armies of the living God could only forget all party difference, and cease to contend about minute distinctions, and present a united front, the kingdom of darkness would soon receive such blows as would make it totter and reel. We have many illustrations in the history of Christianity of what can be done by a united Church of God.

Though the past history of the Church is rich in examples, we need not go beyond the records of our times, and any farther back than our most recent experiences. It will be in the recollection of many that only two or three years ago the English Government proposed what it regarded as a piece of temperance legislation. Under the scheme it was proposed to give the people power to deal with the question of licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors; but it was provided that whenever a license should be refused, compensation should be given to the publican. What happened? The proposal took the nation by surprise; it struck many people almost dumb; but when there had been breathing time a remarkable thing happened. Everywhere good men said this must not be.

Though there were some among the hosts of the Lord who would have allowed the measure to pass, a most remarkable spirit of unity prevailed, and the Church spake out with such a voice that the measure was withdrawn, and we have never seen it since.

Then there was another and more remarkable thing still. The leader of a party, a powerful man, was in the law courts declared guilty of a moral offence. What happened? All sections of the Church spake out boldly, and such was the power of the united voice of the Church that the leader was dethroned. It would be possible greatly to multiply illustrations of the power of a united Church of Christ. The great revivals of our time, in which all sections have united together, are remarkable. The wonderful effects produced upon the heathen, and their conversion to God, are worthy of more notice than the passing reference we give to them. Some of the chapters of missionary history read like the Acts of the Apostles and the days of Pentecost.

In a continental town a fire broke out in the dead of night. All the people turned out to render what help was possible in extinguishing the fire. Yonder was a peaceful lake with abundance of water in it; here was the burning building in which the flames raged. The people were speedily formed into line. When thus placed they reached right away from the lake to the fire. Buckets were brought. One dipped the bucket into the lake and handed it to the next, and thus these buckets were passed along until they reached the hand of one who dashed the contents on to the flames. In that long line there were all sorts of people, for they had come from many lands to take rest and holiday; but the fire united them in efforts to extinguish it. The city banker was there. The clergyman was there. The officer from the army was there. All

sorts and conditions, right down to the servant girl who dipped the buckets into the lake. When the Church of God—the universal Church of God, all sections of it—unites its forces in one long living line, the flames of sin will be extinguished. When all the servants of Christ cease their angry attacks upon each other, and shout with one voice, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,” we expect to see the ramparts of sin totter and fall, and the Millennium day begin to dawn.

II. LET US NOW NOTICE THEIR COURAGE.

If we take time to understand all the circumstances of the case, we shall be struck with the courage of these three hundred men. It was no small task they undertook. Outnumbered by hundreds to one, they were in the presence of no mean fighting men. They had no weapons with which to fight, and if they had possessed them, what could so small a number of men have done against such a host? That Gideon was able to get three hundred men to enter such a gigantic, such a heroic task, speaks well for his own enthusiasm and power over his men; but the history speaks as loudly of the pluck of these few men. Had they been Englishmen they could not have displayed more fibre and courage than was shown. It seems to have been a remarkable trait in the character of this wonderful people. They seem ever to have had abundance of courage. The Bible abounds with instances. David fighting Goliath, Samuel rebuking Saul, Nathan reproving David, Daniel in Babylon, and the three Hebrew youths in the same country, all furnish us illustrations of the courage of this people.

In its conflict with the world the Church needs men of courage. There never was a time it more needed them than now. There are many great and pressing social and

religious problems which need attention and require men of courage and faith to deal with them ; and in all her work she needs men of brave hearts and true, who are not easily daunted.

I suppose it must be said that in the Church there are many weaklings—far too many. People are in it, who have not quite caught the spirit of its Founder and Lord. He said that the wheat and tares should grow together until the harvest, when they will be separated. But weaklings are the trouble of the Church. Men who need to be nursed, coddled, wheedled, petted, and pampered do not add much to the strength of the Church. Like the weak and wounded men in an army, who must be cared for and not left to die on the field, they greatly detract from the fighting strength.

The Church needs men of dauntless courage. She wants ministers of the highest type. She has a long list of illustrious names of men who have served her faithfully in the past ; but she must ask for and seek to get better than any before. She wants brave officers to serve in her ranks—men of skill, piety, and courage. She wants the best sons and daughters in her ranks. She is charged with the responsibility of the salvation of the world. She has to make greater inroads into the ranks of the enemy. She has to carry the battle right into the camp of Midian, and she needs men who can shout, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,” men whose courage will not fail them in the day of conflict and danger. May God raise up for her a host of such men. Let us do what we can to get and be such men. God is with us, and God can make us brave and bold.

III. BUT WE MUST NOW NOTICE THE FAITH OF THESE MEN.

I scarcely know how to speak of this. Seeing the matter as I see it, I am at a loss for words to express my admiration of the faith of the men who could undertake such a piece of work as they did. It was a victory of faith. Oh, what a theme for contemplation the victories of faith furnish! From end to end of the Bible we find them, and some deserve to be written in letters of gold. Our Lord had much to say about faith and the victories it could achieve. Said He, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence;" and if the smallest faith should do so much, what victories should faith so heroic as that of Gideon's men accomplish?

Thinking of the victories of faith, the poet says in the language of a hymn which has had some popularity—

"March to the battlefield!
 March on with sword and shield!
 March on! the foe shall yield
 To Christ our King.
 Onward! ye faithful band.
 Onward! at His command.
 Onward! nor halting stand,
 But loudly sing.

'This is the victory,' we sing by the way,
 'This is the victory, and faith gains the day.'

The Church needs men of faith to-day. This is an age of scepticism, of doubt, and criticism. It has become almost fashionable to talk about doubting as if it were a mark of strength and special attainment to do so. There are not a few who vainly think that it is the mark of a superior person to live in the mists and fogs. The Church wants men who live in the sunshine of strong heroic faith and power. She wants men who can, in mighty faith,

march round the strongholds of sin, just as the Israelites marched around ancient Jericho. She needs men who can go with Bible in hand and win victories for God.

Brethren, this history speaks loudly to us. We are anxious, all of us, to see God's name glorified and His Church made strong. Are we helping to bring about all this? Are we living in such communion with God by Jesus Christ as will deepen our faith in His power to save? We live under the Gospel dispensation, and should be more devoted, more courageous, more heroic in our faith than were these ancient men. But are we better and more devoted than they were? What are the facts of the case? Examine your own hearts, and take stock of your own condition before God.

IV. IN CONCLUSION, WE WILL BRIEFLY NOTICE THE SUCCESS THEY EXPERIENCED.

It was complete. They stood in order round the camp as they were commanded. At the given signal they raised their shouts, broke their pitchers, and flashed their torches. They stood and watched the consternation of the enemy. It was a victory which was God-given and full.

The history of the Church of Christ abounds with God-given victories. Hers is indeed a noble history. It seems difficult to some of us to understand how any one can read the history of Christianity and not see how gloriously God has won for the Church great victories. See how it began. Its founder was poor. Speaking after the manner of men, we have to say that He was a son of the people. He had no rich followers, no great name, no influence at court, no army, no fighting men to swell His train. He lived in an obscure village nearly all His life. He was not a son of the schools in the proper sense of that term. He was out of sympathy with popular tastes and notions, was hated

by the religious leaders, and gave some concern to the public authorities. He was finally condemned, and was considered to be worse than a criminal, for a murderer was preferred before Him, and Barabbas was considered less dangerous to the public welfare than Jesus. And yet the doctrines He taught took fast hold of a handful of His followers, to whom He appeared alive after He had been put to death on the Cross. And these men, like their master, poor and unknown, suffered imprisonment for their teaching. But in spite of it all, their faith in Him was strong, and some of them lived to see powerful and influential churches planted in many places. And the next generation after the Apostles saw this new faith spreading itself through the Roman Empire, gaining victories on every hand.

Time would entirely fail to tell of the achievements of the Church since then. It is strong to-day, stronger than ever before. And it must prepare itself for greater victories still. It needs its best men to blow the trumpet of the Gospel, to flash the torch of truth, and in great faith to cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The victories of the past are to be far surpassed in the future. They are but as the droppings which indicate the coming shower. Night may seem to linger long, but the day will dawn. Error, darkness, evil may seem to prevail in many places, but these shall all disperse before the united, courageous, heroic faith of the armies of God, as the fogs and mists disappear before the rising sun. Winter shall pass, summer shall come, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

Do you ask me how to hasten on this? Do you long to see the day when light shall supplant darkness? Are you anxious to see the time when the kingdom of Satan shall go down before the kingdom of God? Do you wish to

join in the shout of victory which the victorious hosts of the Church shall raise? Then let each man among you try to be all that we have said the Church needs her sons to be. Every man among you get near to God, and grow in faith and love. Every man among you get emptied of the world and its spirit, and be filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ. So grow in grace that you can exclaim, "I live, yet not I, it is Christ that liveth in me." When the sons and daughters of the Church thus live in God, and God in them, no battles will be too severe, no difficulties too great, no problems too hard to solve, and God, even our God, will bless His Church, and all the ends of the earth shall soon see His salvation.

Character and Conduct of Daniel.

“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”—DAN. vi. 10.

IN all ages the truth has had its champions, those who have stood for righteousness and for God. It seems quite right to say that God has never left Himself without witnesses. It is true that on some occasions, and in some places, the witnesses have been but few, and sometimes have had to bear a severe strain, and stand in the midst of fierce opposition and fiery trials. Still every period of the past seems to furnish them. Every remote age presents its witnesses and brings forth its men. When the world had so far swung off from God as to be altogether depraved and corrupt, according to the reading in Genesis, that its people were not fit to live, but must be drowned by the Flood, there were a few even then who witnessed for God. In the midst of the darkness and sin, of which it is said, in Gen. vi. 5, that “every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually,” Noah preached righteousness, and was a beacon-light to warn men off the danger which threatened them. ¶ When Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of the Plain, had sinned away their day of grace, and the hour of their doom had struck, God’s hand was stayed a little because of Lot, who was in that city. Even there, when the cup of iniquity was full to the brim,

God was not without His witness. In Israel, when it was believed that all the Lord's prophets were slain, God had them in caves, and had His Elijah to face the false and speak for the true.

And as it was under the Old Dispensation, so it was under the New, only more so. The Old Testament times were not more remarkable in this than were the New Testament. When religion had sunk down to mere acts of formalism among the Jews, and the priests and people all seem to have lost the true spirit of worship, and rested only in the letter, there was a devout Simeon and a pious Anna who waited for the Consolation of Israel. And in those dark days, soon after the crucifixion of Jesus and the triumph of the enemies of Christ, God emboldened Peter and John and the rest to witness for the truth and boldly preach a risen Saviour.

And when the Apostles had all finished their course, and hot and fierce persecution raged against their followers, God did not leave Himself without witnesses. Sometimes it was an aged man like Polycarp whose faithful voice reaches us ; at others, the feeble voice of a faithful maiden ; then the scholarly tones of a Wicklyfe ; then the thunders of a Luther. Both under the Old Dispensation and the New, both in sacred history and in profane, you will find illustration of our position, that God has seldom left Himself without witnesses.

This text of ours comes from the life of one who was a brilliant example. The life and character of Daniel make a bright passage in the history of the Jews. And though this witness comes from the old world, it is one we delight to see, and to which many saints of God have come in their own trials that they might see how Daniel did in his. Not a few have risen from the reading of this history, this romance, this apocalypse, or whatever else the

critics may be pleased to call it, refreshed and helped. They have done as did this devout Hebrew, sought their own homes, their own rooms, and there have fallen upon their knees, and in prayer have found that consolation to be had in no other exercise.

If we study for a few moments the character and conduct of Daniel, we may get some comfort for ourselves, and some useful lessons we may do well to learn. We will notice four things : first, Daniel's character ; second, Daniel's trials ; third, Daniel's conduct ; and fourth, Daniel's deliverance.

I. DANIEL'S CHARACTER.

There are few Scripture characters so completely beautiful as Daniel's. Examine them all as closely as you will, there are not many of them so perfect, so charming, so attractive as his. It may be almost doubted if any one in the Old Testament of whom we learn as much was so entirely free from faults and sins. No one can doubt for a moment that Daniel was subject to the infirmities which mark our poor human nature. He was but a man. Still our point remains the same, the blemishes are not recorded. It seems a life of holiness, a life lived with God.

Abraham stands out prominently in Bible history. He was indeed a noble man. Like an ancient Pilgrim Father, he came from the crowded districts of Asia to its most western border, that he might build his altars to the one God, of whom he had come to have a clear perception. But there are some things in his life which many have thought strange to be in connection with the "Friend of God." Jacob is one of the three great patriarchs whose name is often quoted. He was one of the great ancestors of the Hebrew race. But no one would for a moment compare his character, as we know it in Genesis, with the character of this Hebrew recorded in the Book of Daniel.

And if you pass on to the New Testament there are not many with more completely beautiful lives than our present hero. Compared with the disciples of our Lord, this character far transcends theirs. Peter denied his Lord with vile language, Judas sold Him, and all the rest forsook Him and fled. Written long before the Advent, this life of Daniel stands out as an example of faith, confidence, and godliness which puts to shame the chosen followers of Jesus Christ.

And suppose we measure what we know of Daniel against ourselves, how will the matter stand? Even if we assume that he had faults and sins which have found no mention on the page of history, which may have been as bad as our own, how does the matter stand as to what we do know of him? Leave out of count both his supposed failings and our known ones; let us set his excellences against our supposed ones; and what then? Have we been as faithful? Have we shown such confidence in God? Have we cared more for conscience than for our own selfish interest? Have we deliberately preferred to stand by our religious convictions and duties rather than accept the questionable favour from those far above us? Have we had a like faith, a like love, a like complete reliance on the unseen but everliving God? I cannot answer for you, but I can for your preacher. And I know he feels ashamed when he thinks of his character as compared with the character of this ancient saint of God.

This character of Daniel will appear to us all the more beautiful if we consider where and when its owner is supposed to have lived. In an Eastern court, long before our era began, Daniel's lot was placed. Probably the child of captivity, among strangers and foreigners, where there was every opportunity to gratify the lower passions and tastes, he grew up and lived with his God, until it seemed

impossible for him to depart from Him. Considered as a young man, or later on, introduced to the king to tell his dreams, or when promoted to be one of the chief ministers, his conduct was faultless. When his colleagues in office sought to find fault with him, they watched in vain. Their wicked eyes, like microscopes, were turned upon him. But even when viewed with such malice and hatred as we know they had toward him, he was faultless.

Here we may learn at least two or three lessons.

1. *This man is a marvellous example to us all.*

His pure life is a proof that God can keep His people in all positions. Daniel was kept in Babylon. The same God who was sufficient for him is able to keep us. And as we live in better times, under the dispensation of the Spirit, when we know more of God than this man could, we ought not to be content to stand behind him. Our aim should be to grow in the knowledge of God, and to increase in the practice of godliness, or God-likeness, until we arrive at the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. I say we ought to aim at this, and we should not be content to grow so slowly. Nor should we be if, like Daniel, we lived our whole life with our God.

2. *This man's good life in high office shows that faithfulness to God is quite consistent with the faithful discharge of proper duties in the highest office.*

Daniel was a pious man. It was his custom to observe his devotions daily. He did not neglect religious duties, and yet he did not neglect his duty to his king. So faithful, so regular, so constant, and so consistent was he in all his secular duties and engagements, that his worst enemies failed to find matter for a charge against him. Now, if he could and did thus serve his God and serve his king, the same course is open to us. The same God can help us.

There is no proper office we can have in which God cannot keep us.

3. *This man's conduct teaches us that our first duty is to conscience and God.*

It is simply charming to find the account of a man in any age who cares more for God than for his own ease, comfort, and safety. What a noble spirit it was which he manifested. He did not feel that it was consistent with his conscience to bow down to any image, and so, rather than do it, he would fling himself upon God. If He willed that His servant should die, well then he would die, but he would die with unstained conscience. In this age of image worship, when many will part with all they have to possess the golden image, it is well to stop and notice the conduct of this old-world saint. It will be well for us if we remember this, God first, not last. God first, whatever it may cost. This was the spirit of the martyrs. This was the spirit which so many of our fathers manifested in their struggles for that freedom which we possess. And it is the spirit which all who name the sacred name should show to the world. And when we do, we shall be a power among our fellows, and "God, even our God, shall bless us."

II. DANIEL'S TRIALS.

It seems somewhat strange, after speaking of the noble and beautiful character of this man, to turn away to talk about his trials. That he had them none can deny. And they were not those little worries, which we sometimes get and nurse so faithfully and lovingly, that they seem to grow into big troubles. His were real. And yet he does not seem to have felt them much. Our text says that, when he knew the decree, which meant, to all appearance, his death-warrant was signed, he went home, made no fuss, but just

went on with his praying as before. He knew he would be watched, and yet he did not take the precaution to close up the window. It was not long before he was doomed.

It may seem strange to some that good men should have such heavy sorrows and trials. It is one of the mysteries of God's providence we do not quite understand; and yet we know it is so. Some of the holiest and best have had crosses to bear. John saw multitudes in heaven which had come up out of great tribulation. Yes, all the saints of God, both ancient and modern, have had them. Abraham was called to offer his son Isaac, his son whom he loved, his son in whom centred all his hopes and all the promises of God. Paul had his thorn in the flesh; and all have had some trial. "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness." There is a cross in every lot. "No cross, no crown." Our Lord Himself had the heaviest of all, though He was the holiest of all.

I suppose we may say and conclude that it is true that there is no noble task without its difficulties, no pure life without its trials. So I say to you who are passing through the deep waters, Look up. Do not be discouraged. God does not promise to save you from trials, but He does promise to be with you in them. "As thy day, thy strength shall be." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."

III. DANIEL'S CONDUCT UNDER TRIAL.

The act is ready for signature. At length it receives the royal assent and becomes law. How does Daniel act now? But a preliminary question comes up. How did he act before it was signed? Do you think this act could be conceived, discussed, carried to the king, and be signed and sealed without Daniel knowing what was afoot? Because the account of the plot is given in four or five verses

of Scripture, we must not conclude that it was done all in a moment. No doubt the movements of these men would be rapid, but it seems hard to believe that it could be done without Daniel knowing something of what was in the wind. And yet if he did know, he must have remained perfectly silent. One word from him to the king would have upset the whole plot, and would have sent to the winds the design of these men. If he did know, he kept his own counsel. Notice the words of our text—"When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house." There is no excitement, no noise, no exclamation of surprise such as we should expect if then, for the first time, he knew of their wicked plot.

But what was his conduct after he knew it was signed? Just as it had been before. No change, no difference. He knew he would be shadowed, watched, dogged, and yet he left open his windows and prayed as before. A modern officer under the Crown in such a tight place might have asked for a month's holiday. He would have backed his request for it by a medical certificate showing the absolute need of rest and change. But Daniel left his windows open and prayed as before. A timid, nervous, half-hearted professor would have closed the windows, prayed in secret, and thus have escaped the observation of the watchers. But Daniel kept his windows open and prayed just as before. It was a good place he held; he had duties to his king, and was under deep and lasting obligations; but he was true to his conscience, and kept his windows opened and prayed just as before.

What a marvellous example! What a lesson for all time! Here is a man who cared so much for God that he could calmly face death itself rather than prove unfaithful to Him. O Daniel, would that thy spirit filled all the Lord's people in this Christian age! Men, let us learn to be true

to God, whatever else; and if we should seem to suffer therefor, God will take care of us.

It is worth while to stop a moment to notice that "he gave thanks before his God." Gave thanks! For what, pray, did he give thanks? Condemned to violate his most cherished religious convictions or be flung to the lions, which seemed to mean certain death, does not seem to be an experience to leave room for thanksgiving; but here is the record. God can help His saints to rejoice, even in the most adverse circumstances. Herein is one of the marvels of the mystery of peace with God. Those who rest in Him, who live in Him, may be calm and thankful in the wildest night. We know that Paul and his companion Silas were mercilessly beaten at Philippi, and then flung into a dungeon, with their feet fast in the stocks. Hungry, tired, wearied, and smarting with pain, they sang praises at midnight. Even at the stake men have been able to glorify God and sing His praises. Great peace have they that know God. The poet must have had some such thoughts as these when he wrote that verse of a well-known hymn which is as follows:—

"We thank Thee more that all our joy
Is touched with pain,
That shadows fall on brightest hours,
That thorns remain,
So that earth's bliss may be our guide
And not our chain."

IV. DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE.

Of this there is not much need to speak, but it was as complete and as glorious as was his obedience and faith. There is a most remarkable line in his answer to the eager question of the king, who came early to learn his fate, "My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions'

mouths." Yes, God can shut the mouths of lions ; He has often done that, and can do it still.

Daniel's deliverance is a remarkable illustration of the power of faith and prayer. In these days it is the custom to smile at prayer, and almost to pity those who are foolish enough or weak enough to believe in its efficacy. Those who do not believe must pass over this book of Daniel. Whatever else it teaches, surely this is on the surface in the first six chapters. More things are wrought by prayer than some men think. Do not lose your belief in a God that hears and answers prayer. I will close this address by quoting some words of a friend of mine who has had a long experience in God's service, and who is still an active worker for God, I mean the Rev. Dr. Newman Hall. He says, " We are told that prayer is unphilosophical, inasmuch as the success of prayer would involve a change of operation in Him who is immutable. 'Has not God arranged all events from eternity? Is not everything foreknown, predetermined by Him ; and can our feeble cries change His all-wise decrees ?' But the same objection applies to our exertions as much as to our prayers. If it is absurd to suppose we can gain anything by asking the help of God, it is surely no less absurd to expect advantage from efforts of our own. Those who urge this plea contradict it in daily life. Let them act upon it, and they will be at least consistent in their folly. Are you in business ?—be not diligent, take no precautions in special circumstances, make no special efforts to secure success. God foreknows and has foreordained to the uttermost farthing how much you will gain or lose : be not so presumptuous as to suppose that your efforts can disarrange His purposes. If you break a limb, ask no surgeon to set it ; if you are in pain, adopt no methods to mitigate it ; if a dangerous malady seize you, call no physician to cure it. How can

you presume to suppose that you can alter the Divine plan, or the irreversible decrees of necessity and fate! Fools and blind. If you *work* to bring about what you deem desirable, in spite of eternal purposes and irrevocable destiny, why not *pray*? If your own exertions may possibly benefit you, why may not God's exertions in answer to your prayers, when He Himself has commanded us to pray, and commanded it as a means of securing assistance from Him? We pretend not to explain the mystery of the Divine purposes in connection with the efficacy of prayer. Neither can our opponents explain the equal mystery of those purposes in connection with the value of their own exertions; yet, with the problem unsolved, they persist in working. So we persist in praying. But how will their efforts for their own well-being rise up at the last day to condemn those who neglected prayer under a pretext which their every action in daily life disowned?"

Danger in Duty.

“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day.”—EXOD. xiv. 13.

IN this text and its setting we see a struggle for freedom. A numerous, an interesting, and a remarkable people have long been held in a bondage so bitter that their cries and groans came up into the ears of the Almighty. Almost every form of tyranny which a powerful nation could inflict upon a weaker people Egypt has imposed upon Israel. Coercive measures so oppressive that they defeated themselves by their very cruelty had been introduced to keep down and weaken the Lord's people. Taskmasters, hounded on by those above them, had driven the toilers to the last degree. Heavy burdens were breaking the backs of the men, whose hearts were already broken, and whose spirits were completely crushed.

But the long, long night of their slavery drew to a close. The dawn of a brighter and better day came to them, and new hopes sprang up within them; men who were in despair saw the sun of liberty rise above them. The hour of their emancipation struck. Sheltered behind the blood-besprinkled door-posts, they waited ready-shod to march at the given signal. With their belongings, their children, their aged, their sick, they marched out, amid the cries and wails of their oppressors, in whose homes all the first-born lay dead. It was a night to be long remembered. Behind them they left the house of bondage, the whip of the overseer, the brickfields in which they had toiled so hard and so

long with such poor remuneration, and many a sad and bitter memory beside. Before them was the promise of a better land, the angel of liberty, the hope of freedom, and the prospect of a more full and glorious time. It is easy to believe that hope filled every breast, nerved every arm, and cheered every heart. Seldom has the world witnessed such a marching out as this, and seldom has any been fraught with such tremendous religious importance.

But their cup of bliss was not long without its bitters. All joys here in this world are short-lived. Shower follows hard upon sunshine, storms will arise, and the lightnings are apt to flash and disturb the fearful. Scarcely are the people well on their way to the land of promise, ere new trials confront them. It was their duty, at God's command, to march out and on, but they have only just done so, ere the Egyptians, enraged at the loss of the serfs who have been their profitable under-paid toilers, march after them with swords and weapons of war. When the Israelites saw the banners of their oppressors, heard the rumble of their war-chariots, and the shouts of their well-known foes, their hearts sank within them. Here was a new difficulty, and one upon which they had not counted. At the very outset they are beset with trouble and risk. As with one voice they seem to have cried out in fear, and wished themselves back again in the old bondage. Though they have breathed the air of freedom, they have not come to know and prize it.

I have heard that when the negroes of South America, who had been born in slavery and knew nothing else but it, came to be set free, a remarkable thing happened. When emancipation day came they found themselves at a given moment all set free. Thousands of them, in possession of that for which they had longed, went out from the old cabins, to wander they knew not where, to do they knew not what.

They were free, that was all they knew or cared. They had dreamed of this, and longed for this, and now it is theirs. But ere long, in face of the difficulty of providing for themselves and getting their living, they sank down helpless, hopeless, despairing, dying. It was almost so here with these Israelites. They have found a priceless jewel, but they know not yet its worth. As soon as they are confronted with danger, they seem to forget their duty, they long to be back, and turn round in anger and reproach against their leader. Full of courage, full of hope, full of the sense of his position, and relying absolutely upon God, Moses did his duty, fearless of the danger. He was not unmindful of it. He saw the coming Egyptians. He knew their skill in arms. He knew how they could, if they would, smite down the hordes he led. His people were unarmed, untrained, ill-fitted to fight. What is he to do? Behind him are the angry enemies, before him the sea. He was as powerless to cross the sea as to fight the coming foe. What can he do? He will do his duty, regardless of the danger. Taking his stand before the people, and lifting up his hand which held the mystic rod, he cried, 'Stand still. Don't be afraid. God will fight for us. You shall this day witness the salvation of God. There is danger here, 'tis true, but He who has brought us out can take us on. Do your duty. Be not afraid.' Whatever coward heart there may have been among them, it was not his. We want this passage to suggest for us the idea of *danger in duty*. And if we may turn aside to look at it, we may get a homely lesson or two.

I. FIRST, THEN, WE NOTICE THAT SOMETIMES DUTY BRINGS DIFFICULTY AND DANGER.

That men often encounter danger when doing their duty is so well known that but little time need be taken to

illustrate it. All religion, and much of secular history, abound with illustrations of it. There are some, 'tis true, who think that it is always easier to do one's duty than to neglect it. But this is a grave and serious mistake to make. The duty of these Israelites was to go right on. But danger stares them in the face almost as soon as ever they have started out on their journey. Always easy to do duty! Ask Moses if he found it so. Ask the three Hebrew young men if they found it easy. To fall down with the rest at the sound of music would risk but little so far as the world could see. But they would not do it; they preferred to do their duty and face the danger. Ask the Apostles who went out to preach the everlasting Gospel of the risen Christ if they found it easy always to do their duty. Imprisonment, scourging, hunger, shame, pain, death were heaped upon them. They found danger and suffering, too, in doing their duty. Ask the great reformer, Luther, whose heroism led to the emancipation of Europe from the intellectual bondage of centuries, if he found it always easy and safe? Not unfrequently the path of duty is edged with thorns, beset with dangers, and lies through blood, and fire, and pain.

It is the path of sin which *seems* easiest of all. Satan as an angel of light gilds the way of wrong, so that men mistake it for gold. The broad way leading to death is filled with light and glare, so that the unwary are misled, enter it, believe the promises of ease and rest which are made, and thus become the dupes of the enemy of God and man.

But we must face the danger and stand for God, as did this brave leader Moses. Is your pathway beset with difficulties? Do you look at your lot just now, and think it full of danger? Are you almost in despair? Keep good hearts, face the danger, go right forward, and God will help you. Have you just left the bondage of Egypt,

and fear the pursuing foe, and shrink back from the river? What of that? If you do hear the crashing of the shingle beneath the feet of the enemy's horse, and feel the hot breath of your relentless enemy behind you, never mind that; keep your face toward the land of liberty. Face the danger. Nothing great, nothing good, nothing worth the having can be had without difficulty and danger. It is through much tribulation we enter the kingdom. And this is true in a thousand ways. The artist whose picture charms you has only reached his present perfection after years of difficulty and toil. The scholar whose discourse moves and stirs you has gone through years of drudgery, and burned huge quantities of midnight oil, ere he could talk as you heard him. The soldier who carries his medals, and ribbons, and honours, also carries his ugly scars, and the memories of many a hard and bitter battle. And so the soldiers of the great King must expect danger and difficulty.

“Must I be carried to the skies
On flowering beds of ease,
While others fight to win the prize
And sail through stormy seas?

Sure I must fight if I would win;
Increase my courage, Lord;
I'll bear the cross, endure the toil,
Supported by Thy Word.”

II. SECONDLY, WE NOTICE THAT GOD WILL BE WITH HIS PEOPLE IN ALL TIMES OF DANGER AND DIFFICULTY.

This historic passage is full of comfort and encouragement to all who want to obey God, regardless of the danger which threatens. “Fear not,” cried Moses, “stand still, and see the salvation of God.” And the salvation of God they did see. God gave them a complete deliverance; not one of

them was lost. The passage suggests two things here in connection with their deliverance.

1. *They were first commanded to stand still.*

Overwhelmed and dismayed, frightened and restless, they cried out in terror in face of their present danger. But sharp and clear rang out the word of command, which was passed all along the ranks, "Stand still." At that moment nothing else was so wise; nothing else could be done with any degree of safety. Action meant death.

There are times in the history of God's people when to be still is to be wise. Excited and restless, we are apt to make mistakes, because we are not in a fit condition to take a calm view of the difficulty which confronts us. And the wisest thing some can do is just to be quiet and wait. That is a significant passage which says, "Their strength is to sit still." And yet this is just the hardest thing which some of God's children can be told to do. Sit still! stand apart! step out of the ranks, and let the soldiers pass on without me! Be inactive! Anything but that. It is hard to be still and do nothing. But it is sometimes absolutely necessary. So long as we keep floundering on, we only make our difficulties greater. God cannot help and deliver us in some things, until we just step aside to let Him.

There is a noble passage in the history of the life of Luther, which is worthy of notice just here. He appeared before his triers. He made a noble defence, a defence which ought to have secured his freedom. And when he had finished he used some such words as these: "Here I stand; I can do no other; God help me." And God did help him. On his way out he was seized by his friends, carried off to a place of safety, and forced to stand aside from the surging tide of tumult and strife. And that saved him. And it often happens that God helps and saves His

people by making them stand aside. That illness you had—it was sharp and inconvenient, you thought. It seemed hard to you at first that you should be down; and all was dark because you were restless. But after a while you began to be reconciled, restful, peaceful. You ceased to strive, and went back upon God. It was then you began to see that God had put you in that school of affliction that He might teach you, that He might bless and help you. You rose from that bed a better man, and left that sick chamber better fitted to face the dangers of daily duty. Why? You had been still awhile and allowed God to work.

I press this point because I know its importance. What could this people do but stand still? All else was hopeless. To turn round and attempt to fight the enemy meant destruction. And they had no boats with which to cross the sea. The leader displayed heavenly wisdom when he commanded them to stand still and see what God could do. If you will not consider me departing from my subject, I should like at this point to say that I believe one reason why more men are not saved by Divine grace, and brought out of the Egyptian bondage of sin, is just because they don't stand still. They are trying all sorts of expedients to work out for themselves peace of mind and rest of heart. I doubt if any man can ever know the mystery of the peace of God until he shall cease his own efforts, and let God by His Spirit enter into possession of the waiting soul. I think it was Mr. Moody who used a homely and striking illustration, to give light upon this point. Sitting at supper-table he saw a fly in a glass of water. It made frantic struggles to get out. The more it struggled the worse it became. Legs, wings, body, all seemed to be getting less and less useful. At length it ceased to struggle, and settled down as if to die. Then he

took a fork and put it down into the glass where the fly was. In an instant it was on the fork, lifted out of the water and danger. It was not long ere it could walk across the table-cloth, and after trimming itself up a bit, it was able to fly away, and did. I say it is homely, but helpful. Men, you cannot save yourselves, or Jesus died in vain; but He can save you, and will when you stand still and let Him.

2. *They were next commanded to go forward.*

"Stand still" was the first command; "Go forward" was the second. At first these almost seem opposite and contradictory; but they are not so. Men can go forward and face the danger because they have stood still.

Putting these two together, I liken them to waiting upon God in prayer to get strength and renewal, and then going out to march and toil and fight for God and His glory in the strength which He supplies. "Watch and pray," said Jesus Christ. "Tarry at Jerusalem," said the same Saviour. And yet the same Lord commanded them to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." It is good to wait when God says wait; it is our duty to go forward when He commands. Yes, and we must go forward, however dark, difficult, and dangerous may seem the path. These Israelites might have answered, "How can we go forward? The sea is there. We have no means of crossing it. To go forward will be to march to death." "Forward," cried the leader, and forward they went; ~~and~~ not a man of them was lost.

Let me impress this lesson, that in any danger which obedience to God may bring, God Himself will be with us. God can divide seas for His people still. It is our duty to face them all. To turn back means loss, ruin, death. You have read the "Pilgrim's Progress." You remember the terrible fight that the pilgrim had with the monster.

Poor fellow ! it went hard with him. He was almost overcome. You remember that in one part of the story we are led to believe that the pilgrim was well nigh turning to flee, but he suddenly remembered that, whilst he was clothed with armour which protected him, *he had no armour at his back*. Dangers are made to be faced, and difficulties to be overcome ; and the way to come off conqueror is to go right on in the strength of the Lord. I have sometimes watched bathers. One walks round the water, putting in his toes and shrinking back, as if the water were boiling hot ; another comes and dashes in, head foremost, and comes up all aglow. Whilst I am far from saying that we should lightly rush into danger, and face difficulties, I want us all to learn that, however threatening our prospects, however dark our outlook, however fierce the danger in front, or however deep the sea we have to cross, we must hear in the voice of duty the call of God, and from that we must not waver by the breadth of a hair. Forward means life, peace, God ; to turn back means loss, ruin, death. And for myself, I welcome everything which takes us on in the name of God.

There was a City merchant who loved and feared God. In the course of his business he came, as many another honest man has, into difficulties, and it seemed that he must be ruined. In his perplexity and pain he went home to tell his wife that he feared the worst must come, and that probably house, and home, and all would go. It was sorrowful news—news bad enough to crush any woman, not to say a woman who has had ease and luxury to enjoy for many a long year. For a few moments the wife sat in silence, and then said, “ My dear husband, is your conscience clear, and your hands clean of all dishonesty ? ” “ They are absolutely,” replied he. “ Then,” said the brave

woman, "go right on ; do your duty ; trust in God, and all will be well."

The knowledge of God's presence with us should help us in life, and in death should be our solace and strength. It was this which gave Moses confidence, and helped him at his post. It was this which gave the Apostles confidence when before the rulers, and took from them all fear of man. It was this which comforted and cheered our glorious martyrs in all their pain and suffering. When Wesley lay dying, surrounded by the men who had been his helpers, it is said that he clasped his hands and said, "The best of all, God is with us." If He be our portion all will be well. Then in truth may we join with the hymn-writer and sing—

“ Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled,
Then I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world.”

The Joy of the Lord.

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”—NEH. viii. 10.

THIS was a memorable occasion, and deserving of note. It was a great assembly of the people called together for a special and important purpose. Some while before, they had come home to their fatherland to settle in it and live as best they could. Their Temple has been rebuilt, and they have been encouraged and strengthened by the presence and work of the noble spirited Nehemiah, who found no rest among the luxuries of the Persian palace, so long as his people at Jerusalem were poor, exposed, and undefended. But on this occasion they have convoked a great assembly, that they may listen to Ezra, the priest, as he reads and expounds to them the law of the Lord. Imagine the assembly if you can. Crowded together, they are full of expectation and hope. There on a raised tower of wood, here called a pulpit, but which we might call a platform, made for the purposes of that day, stands the priest with the parchment-roll in his hand. On his right hand and on his left stand a number of the leading officials of the people. As Ezra opens the roll, all the people rise to their feet, and stand as he reads and expounds. He declared unto them the law of God. Doubtless he told them of the goodness and mercy of their God, and urged them to put away their sinful neglect of God and His ordinances. The effect was marvellous. George Whitfield, it is said, once addressed a great gathering of colliers in one of the mining districts.

His theme was the truths of the Gospel, and he preached repentance and salvation. It is said that, as he discoursed to the rude rough men, who stood there in their working garb, and with unwashed faces, the Spirit of God touched their hearts. Listening to the sacred eloquence of Whitfield, tears filled their eyes and ran down their faces, making channels for themselves through the coal-dust there. And so here. As the priest made plain the word of God, the Spirit was present, impressing the hearts of these assembled Jews. They wept, and could not help it. Smitten with a sense of their sin in the neglect of the word of God, they wept. But they wept, too, at the feelings of joy which they had in the knowledge of God's deliverance. He had brought them home to the land of David—the place of their fathers' sepulchres—and they could not repress their tears of joy, as well as of sorrow. But as Nehemiah saw them weep, he exclaimed, 'Weep not; this is a day of mercy, of gladness, of thanksgiving. Let peace fill your hearts, and hope cheer your souls. Dry up your tears. Eat, drink, and be merry. Enjoy all your good things with gratitude and festivity. Send blessings to the poor and the unfortunate. This is no day for suffering, and hunger, and fasting; let all be made comfortable; let everybody share in the brightness and blessedness of this day. The joy of the Lord is your strength.' The people did as they were told. The assembly broke up, and its scattered members went away to enjoy great mirth and a day of real joy in God.

That old Jewish religion was a happy one in ancient days. If we judge the Hebrew worship and religious observance simply by what it had become in our Lord's day, we shall not think much of its joy, for it does not seem to have had much then. But before it had sunk into a mere round of ceremonial observances, the old religion

had a good deal of happiness—of mirth, of song, of fasting, and of real rejoicing in connection with it. It was a joyous religion. This text shall suggest for us to-day the idea that God's service is joyful, and that the joy of the Lord gives strength.

I. THERE IS HAPPINESS AND JOY IN LIVING WITH AND FOR GOD.

And this is an important statement. If it be true it should command your attention. There never was a time when men were more eager for happiness than now. Time, money, strength, and energy, are all freely expended in the search for happiness and joy. And the desire for it is not peculiar to any class or to any age. The poor as well as the rich seek for happiness. True, they do not always seek for it in the same way ; but the docker as eagerly courts it as the duke. The prince pursues it with untiring toil, and the peasant longs to have it. The child, the youth, the man in his prime, and the aged one with white locks and bent back, all join in the pursuit. I can well remember the first time I saw an engraving of the picture, the Pursuit of Pleasure. It was exhibited in a shop-window, and I looked hard and long at it. In the picture was a beautiful figure of a woman, with butterfly-wings, gliding through space. Following hard after her were all ranks and conditions of men, so arranged by the artist as to suggest many forms of enjoyment and excitement, but all eager to get the goddess. In the haste, and whirl, and rush, some had fallen and were trampled, but all who could were pressing on, eagerly on, to the abyss. Is not this a picture of what goes on? It is no fancy sketch. Men pursue that goddess still. Forgetting that peace, joy, real happiness must arise from within, from the state of the heart and mind, from union with God and all that is

purest and best, men rush blindly off into a thousand outward diversions. No labour is too great, no journey too long, no expense too much to endure, to undertake, to pay, if joy and peace can be had. Theatres abound, and we have music halls without end. Men passionately devote themselves to horse-racing, and all it means, to get pleasure. The ball-room, the wine-cup, all have their votaries. There, innocent and desirable as some of them are, all fail to give rest to the troubled conscience, ease to the sore heart, or to impart that joy and happiness which are to be found in living with and for God.

It is our clear and deliberate conviction that God means us all to have happiness and peace. It is His will that all men should know the joy of the Lord to be their strength. He has put thousands of things in the world to make us glad and carry us right to Him. The heavens above us, God's handy-work, with their wonders, are all calculated to give us gladness. The ever-changing clouds, the pure white, the gold, the amber, God has made to teach and help us. The hills which lift their heads to Him, the clouds, the trees of the field which clap their hands, the streams and rivers, the gardens and fields, the birds which sing and make the air vocal with music, all seem to tell us that God wants us to be happy. Look at the lamb in the field, the kitten on the hearth, the child on your lap. How full of fun, of lightness, and of brightness, all these seem to be. Surely God means us all to be joyous and happy.

What the sensual exciting pleasures of the world fail to give, and what God's works seem to indicate that it is the will of God to impart, we declare to be within reach of all who will live with and for God. And this is not a statement from an old book which cannot be relied upon. It is not the testimony of some old world saint which cannot be proved now. Nor is it the report of any irresponsible

spouter which cannot be brought to the test. It is a statement which every man who hears me can examine and prove for himself. Many of you have done so, and know the truth of my proposition. Well will it be for all the rest if my words induce them to examine into the matter for themselves. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," says Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I am not unmindful of what some ignoramus may say on the other side. I say ignoramus, because he is that who says that when we seek God and practise religion we take leave of pleasure, and bid good-bye to happiness and joy. It is then, and only then, that we enter into peace, perfect peace. Is the traveller sorry who ends his long, lone, tiresome journey through the wind and rain, by entering into his happy home? When the sick man loses his pain, leaves his bed, forgets his weariness, and is convalescent, is he sad and sorrowful? When the poor man loses his poverty and enters into possession of the comforts which riches procure, does he bid good-bye to all good things? When the drowning man grasps the life-buoy thrown to him, and knows he is being drawn in safety to the shore, does he feel that he bids good-bye to all that is desirable and good? Bid good-bye to happiness and peace and joy by living with and for God! Real joy then begins. It is loving God, and God loving man, which makes the man a new and happy creature. What money fails to give, God's love imparts. What mere amusement cannot impart, God can give. You are doubtless acquainted with the story of the jester who was ill, dispirited, and low. He went to consult a doctor. After a careful examination the doctor said, "You are run down a bit and low-spirited. You should go and

hear the jester." "Alas!" said the man, "I am the jester himself."

Another has well said, I would not be unmindful of the sorrows and pains of life, which it seems almost impossible to escape. How could I overlook these, even if I would? I have seen them so often in the experience of my dear friends here and elsewhere, that they are ever before my eyes. And I, too, have been in the school in which they are taught, and know most of them by a sad and bitter experience. Still I keep to my statement, and I know the Bible, as well as the experience of God's saints, bears me out. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." The Saviour Himself teaches us how to have joy and strength in God. He went to a wedding feast and made water into wine. He attended little social gatherings, and made the company happy. He went to the house of mourning, and turned out the unwelcome visitor death, and made joy and thankfulness take the place of sorrow and sighing. And what He did for others He will do for us. He is not a Saviour of the past only, but ever the same.

It is sin which makes misery and sorrow and pain. It ever has done, and ever must do, until it is abolished altogether by Christ becoming all and in all. It is sin which sets man against man, friend against friend, and makes homes sad and miserable. It was sin which made Judas sell his Lord for a few pieces of money; which led Peter to deny his Lord with oaths and curses; which robbed King David of his home; took Saul's popularity and power away from him, and sent him to die in despair on Mount Gilboa; it drove old father Adam from the Garden of Eden, and expelled the angels from heaven. Sin influences the worst of human passions, creates violent strifes, originates the conflicts of nations, kindles the torch of war, and deluges the earth with blood. But Jesus Christ came to destroy it, to

change the human heart, renew man's life in God, and restore happiness, joy, and peace to all who live with God. The presence of Christ in the heart changes winter into joyous happy summer, the desert into a garden, sighs into songs, fills dark valleys with light, turns night into day, death into life, and hell into heaven. The life lived with and for God is a happy life ; and he who lives it knows the meaning of this text which says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

II. THERE IS JOY IN WORKING FOR GOD.

This too deserves to be considered. Joy in service. Not a few of you here to-day know much of this joy. Some who do not quite know may ask me what I mean by working for God. Is it preaching the Gospel in a pulpit? If so, only a few of us can have that joy. I hope you will admit that a real true man in a pulpit renders service to God and his fellows. But it would be a fatal mistake to suppose that only there, or even only at God's house, can we work for God. On this question of working for God I desire to say three things.

1. *All work for the good of man is work for God.*

If we can get hold of this idea it may help some of us in our ordinary daily duty. If I preach the Gospel which saves a soul, that is regarded by all as God's work. But if I help men's bodies, men's minds, and improve men's surroundings, and ennoble their lives, surely I am working for God as well—as much as when I preach the Gospel. Indeed, all good and necessary work for the uplifting of man is the Gospel. The Gospel is not something which refers simply to the Kingdom to come ; it is the Kingdom of God within men, and heaven upon earth. True, it has to do with the hereafter ; but it has more to do with the time that now is than many of us have yet seen. I say let us take this idea

into our daily duty, and it will glorify even the commonest duties.

Here is a doctor. His business is to relieve pain, cure disease, and lengthen human life. Is not that good? The body is God's handiwork; and man needs it with which to glorify God. Here is the teacher in a day-school, who takes the young child and helps and trains it. Under the teacher's care the intellect expands and grows, until the pupil begins to understand and enjoy life. The statesman, the reformer, the philanthropist—these all do work for God. Nor are these the only workers. There are thousands of lowly people, unnoticed by the world, whose names never get into the newspapers, and are scarcely ever heard many streets away, who do faithful service for God. I mean the quiet workers in our homes—our mothers, wives, sisters, servants—who make our homes clean, sweet, bright, healthy, and happy. I dare say the ordinary common drudgery of your domestic life may seem poor enough and uninteresting enough. It ought not to be so regarded. If it be the work God has given you to do for those who love you, then do it for God. If you will only look at it in this way, and feel that we should all be poorer, weaker, worse than we are, but for your work, you will begin to see that every duty is done for God, and you will have joy in doing it. The joy of the Lord will be your strength.

2. Those have greatest joy who work in a godly spirit, and put heart into their work.

This is almost self-evident. And yet it needs to be spoken of sometimes, because we are all apt to forget it.

There is a good deal of what we call direct religious work, which brings but little joy to the worker. Why? Because it is done in a formal lifeless way; because there is no heart put into the work. The workers, to use a common expression, have just enough religion and heart to

make them almost miserable; they have not enough of God and devotion to enable them to get the full blessing and joy which workers may have. There are teachers in Sunday-schools, workers in missions and in churches, and preachers in pulpits, who do not live in the sunshine of God as much as they should. I remember entering a ritualistic church on the south coast of England. It was broad daylight when I entered; but inside there was a gloom almost like midnight—"The dim religious light" I suppose they call it. It was dim enough, but I don't know much about the religiousness of it. I like the sunshine; I like to feel its warmth and glow. Those workers for God and the good of man get most joy who put most heart into their work, and who do it in a deeply religious spirit. And that we may do this, let us live in close contact with "Christ, the light of the world." I have yet a third thing to say on this question of work.

3. *God has a work for us all, and can give us joy in it.*

Is this so? I think it is. And not only so, God has joys and blessings for us all in working for Him, which surpass all else.

Let us look at this matter. A work for all. One to preach the Gospel to perishing men, and to declare all the promises of God to His saints. Another to stand on the temperance platform, and declare the gospel of abstinence, and lead the way in the practice of it. Another to be a light for God in the workshop, by showing that religion makes us as careful of the employer's time and material as we are of our own. Another to be the embodiment of Christian sweetness and purity in the home. Another to carry the Christian spirit into the place of public position and power. And all to aim at the conversion of men, and the salvation of the world from all that is impure, unjust, unholy. The joy which God gives a man

who leads another man into the ways of Christ, cannot be told. The Book says, "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." I know what it is to have the good word of one's fellow-men, to have the confidence of one's companions and helpers in toil, to have some of the honours which men have to bestow, to enjoy the comforts and love of home, and to share the advantages and blessings of travel, but not all these equal the blessing which God gives me when I am used as the instrument to make one sad heart happy. Who can tell the blessing and joy of making one dark home bright and joyous; one bad husband kind, and gentle, and good; one sinner into a saint? "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." There is joy in working for God.

III. THE JOY OF THE LORD IS OUR STRENGTH.

We must look at this before we close, for it is worthy of observation. "Joy, strength." Think of these two a little. If we were disposed to speak after the manner of men, we should say wealth is your strength. And that would mean that only a few could be strong, for the possessors of wealth make but a limited number. And observation would lead me to say that of the number only a portion seem to have strength and gladness. If we did not use the term wealth, some would say, influence, place, authority, and social position. But the text does not use any of these terms, so we will at once dismiss them all from our consideration now. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

I will only stop to say three things under this head.

1. *The joy of the Lord is your strength in temptation.*

I stop to note this, because I know that not a few of you have suffered in this way, and there may be others of

whom I don't know. You may be prisoners for a while in Doubting Castle, or you may be climbing the hill Difficulty, on your hands and knees. It is the joy of the Lord, the joy He waits to give you, that will be your strength. Get into the sunlight of God, and joy will fill your heart, which will dispel the gloom and doubt. The promises of God are all yours. They make so many vineyards and orchards and gardens in which you may pluck fairest flowers, richest fruits, to your heart's content. Walk into the gardens of God. Do not stay in the wilderness. You remember the joy God has given you. Still have joy in God, and that will be your strength. Let nothing rob you of that.

2. The joy of the Lord will be your strength in suffering and loss.

Suffering, loss, pain, death come to us all. What is your hope for these certain experiences? On what do you rest for confidence then? Christ speaks to us of two men who built houses to shelter them in the time of storm. One was shrewd enough to get a good foundation, and his house bore the test of the tempest. But the other was a jerry-builder. He paid but little heed to essentials. His foundation was not good. He did not get down to the rock. When the storm came his house came down about his ears. When he needed shelter it gave way. When it was too late to build another he found himself homeless. Homeless! That is a sad thought—to be homeless in the great city, poor and penniless, is enough to make us shudder as we think of it. But for the soul to have no rest in God, no joy in Him, to be a homeless sinner is worst of all. He that is built on the eternal Rock of Ages, and who rests in God, will find the joy of the Lord to be his strength in the greatest storm that can come. I know nothing equal to this. A public life and ministry of many years has

brought me into contact with all sorts of people. I have seen many, far more than I can speak of, who were leaving this world for the next. And I have invariably found that God's presence has been their one ray of light, of hope, of peace, of joy. All the saints of God have found it so. And so they will find it until the last saint is gathered home. When Paul stood face to face with martyrdom what did he say?—"I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

3. *The joy of the Lord will be your strength in all your life.*

There is immense strength in joy. Any task you may have to perform will be lightened if you come to it with joy. Joyful feet are not soon tired. Love and joy in the heart lighten all the loads of life, and help to keep us at our post. Let us all, then, learn to have more joy in God. Our religion should be bright and joyous. The sombre and the sad are not the proper garbs for those who live in God, and in whom God lives. The message sent to the world when our Lord came into it was, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy." If we put more joy into our religion, into our life, into our work, we shall be all the more successful. So let us use the words of Wesley and say—

"Rejoice, the Lord is King :
Your Lord and King adore ;
Mortals, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore.
Lift up your hearts, lift up your voice ;
Rejoice—He bids His saints rejoice."

The Working Man's Friends.

OUTLINE OF A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ADDRESS TO WORKING PEOPLE,
FIRST DELIVERED IN BIRMINGHAM.

OF all the classes of society there is none which has so many *professed* friends as the working class. If friendship is worth anything—if it brings any advantage, then the working man ought to have many advantages. For there is no class above us or below us which has so many advocates, helpers, and flatterers. And it is a wonder to me that any of you are at all poor! There appears no orator, no reformer, no candidate for any public office, but he professes to be “the friend of the working classes.” The stump orator will get up and tell you he is your friend—tell you that you need less labour and bigger pay. And then again there is the man who becomes a candidate for the School Board. He sets up as the friend of the working man. Then if a cheesemonger or bacon factor gets rich enough to go into the town council, he goes there as the friend of the working classes. If there is to be an election of Parliament, two-thirds of the candidates talk loud and long about the help they will give to the working man, and they think so much about you at the polling day that they will actually send their carriages to your doors and drive you to the voting station. Liberals and Tories both do it. At those times they make promises long enough to reach from here to the middle of next week. They tell us all sorts of grand things about what they will do. “Send me to Parliament, and you shall have five Sundays in every

week—you shall only have two working days, and for every working day you shall have three pay days!!!” But wait till the working man is in difficulties—wait till a real time of need comes to him, and how much will these professed friends care for him! What help will they give him? Your child is smitten down with the fever, and your wife also takes the infection. What will they do for you then? Some of them would not give you a sixpence if it would save your wife and child from the grave. In the time of our distress, like the priest and Levite, they will pass by on the other side. The working man needs better friends than these, or else he will have to do, as others have often done, eat dry bread because *he cannot get* butter. They will pity us any amount, but pity without relief is like salt without beef, and you will have to eat a lot of *that* to make a good meal.

One day there were two men talking about a man in distress, whose wife was ill. One of the speakers was a Quaker, and the other was a very rich man. The latter expressed his pity, and was very sorry for the suffering one. The Quaker listened to him for a long time, and at last exclaimed, “Well, friend, I pity him a sovereign; how much dost thou pity him?” *That* is real friendship, real help, but is rarely found. The majority are like the priest and the Levite, and instead of helping us only increase our pain.

But I now turn from these so-called friends and tell you of a few real ones. I will put my thoughts under four heads, and point out *four real* friends of the working man.

I. THE FIRST IS GOOD HEALTH.

This is one of the best friends you can have. You have not wealth—of course I do not mean to say you have no “stocking,” or “nest egg,” or “well-lined teapot,” but I mean as the world goes you are not wealthy. But if you

have not wealth you *have health*. Thank God for it, for it is one of the best things you can have. If you have two good strong arms and a healthy body, you have that which many a rich man would purchase from you if he could with the whole of his fortune. A gentleman was being ferried across a stream by a number of boatmen. They were, I suppose, very poor, scarcely knowing how their next day's food would come. And as the gentleman lay there in the boat, paralysed, he looked at these men with their strong arms, and was heard to say, "I would gladly give my *wealth* for the *health* of one of these fishermen!" Naaman, the Syrian mentioned in the Bible, had *honour*, position, wealth; but he was a leper. If you have health you have a good friend, and, therefore, I say, be thankful for it.

If health be really a friend, it is important that we should try to preserve it. If *that* goes from the working man, *all* goes. Upon our *health* depends our work, and our labour is the only commodity we have to sell; if health be gone, we have no labour to sell—then we are poor indeed.

Now, in order to preserve health, I should recommend you to live in those districts and in those houses—and only in those districts and houses—where you can be healthy; where you can breathe the fresh air God gives us; where the sunshine can *enter* your dwellings, and not just glimmer on the house-top. Live where you can open your windows—where a white counter-pane will not get besmeared with soot. "But," you say, "how are we to do it? All very fine for you to talk thus to us working men." Well, I say, some of you *could* do it better than you do—if you *would*. Where do you live? Perhaps some of you live down in the crowded dirty terraces. Some of you would say, I can't afford a better home. Can't you? Let us look at the matter. Some of you—many of you—smoke. I will reckon you half an ounce a day for six days. On Saturday you are

paid. Of course you must do it large then ; so you smoke two twopenny cigars. Then on Sundays you burn two more cigars, making in all a considerable sum. That is your difference of rent between poor rooms and better ones. I have not reckoned what you drink, because some of you swallow so much that I can scarcely reckon its cost. But you see that the tobacco will in some cases, and *drink* and tobacco in most cases, consume the difference between a poor house and a good one.

Then you should be careful what you eat, if you wish to preserve your health. I have often spoken to you about *drinking*, now let us talk about *eating*. I once heard of a lad—he must have had a man's, or a horse's stomach—who went to a party where coffee was served up with buns, and he was said to have consumed no less than *sixteen buns and six cups of coffee!* I heard of another man who consumed a 4lb. loaf at a meal. On some one remonstrating with him, he replied, “What's a 4lb. loaf, when it's cut thin and nicely buttered?”

Eat plain, good, wholesome food ; it is not half so expensive as other kinds of food. And don't eat either sixteen buns or a 4lb. loaf at a meal. Remember that “little coals make good fires, but big coals put them out.” It is better to have a little fire to warm us, than a big fire to burn us.

Another way to preserve your health is to be careful what you drink. *Have pure water!* But I suppose it is nonsense talking about *water*. Some folks will not drink it until it is dirty and costly ; and water may be dirtied in various ways, by the physician or the brewer. And there are people who seem as fond of physic as some are of drink. My advice is, take as little physic as you can. I heard Arthur O'Neil, the old Chartist of Birmingham, say that in his early life he studied medicine, and he studied it

sufficiently to resolve never to drink a drop of it if he could help it; and one of the greatest authorities on physic has said, "Shun doctors and doctors' drugs if you wish to be well." The best doctors for working men to consult in order to keep this friend health, are *Dr. Diet*, *Dr. Quiet*, and *Dr. Merryman*.

Don't drink too much *ale*; don't have too much *spirit*. Be a little bit more temperate than you are. I know some of you are fond of your drops of "short." If one goes into your sitting-rooms about tea-time, there is such a "*fume*," that one is reminded of rum and tea. You do it, I suppose, because it is *fashionable*. I am afraid, however, that many do it, as the Quaker said, "*because they like it*." Now, if you wish to preserve your health, the *less* you *drink* the *better*.

II. THE SECOND FRIEND OF THE WORKING MAN IS A GOOD WIFE.

Now, women, shut your ears a bit while I talk to these men. I do not wish to make any unpleasantness between you and your husbands, and therefore you had better not hear me for the next five minutes. I do not say this as one of your *friends* to induce you young men to get wives—you *will* do that soon enough without me advising you. I have seen some going to be married when I thought it was a pity that they were too big to be whipped! But some of them have been *flogged enough* with the *women* they have got! But I mention this in order that I may induce you *married men*, who have good wives, to place a higher value upon them than some of you do. I am often pained at the way *you* beat your wives. I know many of you now; and I see your wives sometimes. I am troubled with the thought that they don't get from you the help and the kindness which they ought to have. Now I want to say

to you that it is my conviction that *a good wife is the best earthly friend you have*. Let your wives have your sympathy; spend more of your time with them; let them have your love—kind words—kindly expressions—and loving looks. Which of you have spoken a kind word to your wives for the last six months? Have you gone home and offered to do some trifling thing—gone into the cellar to bring up the coal, or to put your hand to a single thing? Look at the amount of work a wife has to do in a house with four or five, or perhaps six, little children, and a bad tempered scamp of a husband. It is no child's play. What with the *cleaning* and the *baking*, the *mending* and *making*, it is just enough to get any woman to the end of her strength. Instead of spending your time at the "Goose" or the "Green Man," spend more with your wives. Now, women, you can listen again.

III. THE NEXT FRIEND I WANT TO POINT OUT IS THE SAVINGS-BANK.

"But," you say, "times are too bad to save." But they were not always bad; there has been some good trade. What have you done with your money? Did you put it into the bank? I know some of you did; but don't tell me how much you have there, lest I come to you for some of it. But how many of you have saved *nothing*? Hundreds never think of saving a penny, and never do. But I should like to induce you to be careful with the money you get, and try to place *some* of it in the savings-bank. I know that there are hundreds of men who do save. Working men and working women, I recommend you to make the savings-bank your friend. Get into the *habit* of saving. I made his acquaintance once, when I was nine years old. I went to a bank and deposited *threepence*—all at once! They gave me a bank-book, and I went away as

proud as if I had deposited three thousand pounds. I continued saving until I had two shillings. And I can assure you it was no easy task for *me* to raise such a large sum as that. Never before had I possessed so large an amount. You may ask what became of it. Well, if you won't tell anybody, I will let you know. My mother No. 2 got to know that I had two shillings saved. You smile at the mother being numbered. I am obliged to number them, because I have had three. Perhaps that accounts for my being so big and strong. How could I help it with three mothers to look after me. Mother No. 2 persuaded me to draw my two shillings out of the penny bank. And what do you suppose I did with it? I gave it her, and have never seen it since. What better could I have done? Working men, don't you see that the few pounds you put away are useful to buy jackets for the lads, and boots and hats for the girls? Make the acquaintance, then, of the savings-bank. If you have this friend, it will get you others. Sometimes a man's friends are numbered by the length of his purse. If people think you have nothing, they will turn up their noses at you, but, if you are saving, and can show them the *outside* of a bank book—don't show them the inside—they will say, "Oh, he is of some consequence—he has *money in the bank!*"

IV. AND THE FOURTH FRIEND I MENTION IS RELIGION.

I do not place this last because it is least. It is the best. Let us look at it seriously and soberly. I care not what you are, nor where you live, it is my conviction—and *yours too*, if you will admit the honest thoughts of your hearts—that religion is the *best thing* for *this* life as well as for the next. It is worth all others, and all others are worthless without *it*. It helps to get all others. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these

things shall be added." If a man is without it he is miserably poor, however long his account at the bank. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Religion, my dear friends, will teach you how to live. When I talk about religion, I mean that you shall adopt those principles which will *change your hearts, reform your lives*, and bring you *contentment*, and a quiet and peaceable consciousness of God's favour. I pray that you may have these good friends always.

The Working Man's Enemies.

OUTLINE OF A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ADDRESS TO WORKING PEOPLE,
FIRST DELIVERED IN BIRMINGHAM.

IF I am not mistaken, the working man has many enemies. A hundred friends would be too small a number, whilst one enemy is far too large. And the misfortune is that many of those who profess to be our friends are in reality enemies—wolves wearing sheeps' clothing. Hence, we need to examine very carefully the credentials of all those men and those things which present themselves to us as our friends. Remember "all that glitters is not gold." Many a man, deceived by the *surface* appearance, has got *dross* instead of gold. If all our enemies came to us *as* enemies, we might get on with them better than we sometimes do. If when we saw a man we *knew* him as our enemy or our friend, without any possibility of deception, we should know how to deal with him. But when we are stabbed in the dark—when we are "hit below the belt"—we are troubled.

A minister—not a teetotaller—once went to visit at the house of a member of his church. He was persuaded by them to take a little "for his stomach's sake." He refused; *his* stomach did not need it; but he was pressed—urged—to take it, and at last he did so. He took another glass, and another, and another, until he got what you politely call "tight." Sitting there in the hot room, he was unconscious of what he was doing, but the moment he put his foot outside the door, in the cold air,

he found himself drunk. And those people who had so kindly pressed upon him the drink, reported to his deacons that their minister was rolling drunk on such a night! This is "hitting below the belt."

Those who profess to be our friends are sometimes "wolves wearing sheeps' clothing." The application, therefore, is, *be careful*.

I think there is a proverb—I do not know to what nation it belongs—which says, "Before you make a friend, eat a peck of salt with him." That means, of course, that you have to be careful about receiving men as your friends.

It shall be my business for a few minutes to point out to you a few of your enemies.

I. THE FIRST ENEMY I NAME IS THE PUBLIC-HOUSE.

You won't expect me to say very much about this now; not because I can't, or because I am unwilling, but because in these lectures I have already said so much.

I know that there are some public-houses well conducted, and that some publicans are as good as many other sinners, and that public-houses of some kind seem to be a necessity—and that even teetotallers have to visit them sometimes; but I regard the public-house as your enemy. I am bound to say that, take them *as a whole*, they are our enemies. You women think so, don't you?—I knew you did. Some of you women to-day are wearing your last year's bonnets, and would have had new ones but for the *public-houses*. Some of your children are not so well clad as they might be, if the husbands would only come home with the money instead of going to the public-house.

If we could only get the men and the women of the working classes out of the public-houses, we should soon see them among the happiest of all our people. May the day soon come when the poison-tap of the pub will be

quite stopped. The public-house has been, and is, the working man's deadliest enemy, and the sooner you help us to kill it, the better both for you and for all of us.

II. ANOTHER ENEMY TO ALL CLASSES, AND ESPECIALLY TO THE WORKING CLASS, IS THE WAR-SPIRIT WHICH SOMETIMES SEIZES MEN.

I am not here to talk politics. I can do that at the right time, but I am here to-day for another purpose. I am not going to cram into you my Toryism(?), but I want to make you feel that *war* is *your* enemy. I should like to know whose friend it is. Whose friend can it be? Think of the horrors that follow it! Whole districts devastated—houses thrown down—cities destroyed—men murdered—children butchered—women outraged! And then amongst the soldiers we have the fairest and best men of the nations striving against each other for no fault of their own. Men who go to kill each other are not natural enemies—they have not differed with each other—they have not quarrelled; but a few men in the upper ranks have chosen to disagree and send these men to fight out the quarrels, the disturbers themselves keeping out of gunshot. The poor men with their officers go into the hottest of the strife, and often fall by hundreds and thousands! Think then, if you can, of all the horrors of the battlefield! Not only are men shot dead, but fall wounded, and have the life trampled out of them by excited men and furious horses. Others bleed to death; some starve or die of thirst, as the case may be! Whose friend is war? It can never be called the working man's friend. War has been no friend to our country. What are the facts? Why, I believe, in round numbers it may be said that *one-third* of our national revenue is devoted each year to the supplies of the army and navy—one shilling out of every three of the national

income set apart for fighting, men and material. We have a great national debt, swallowing millions in interest. How has that debt come about? It has been caused by the wars of the past.

I say war can never be the friend of the working man. When it comes, who suffers? All! But who suffers the most? There was a working man who spoke at a meeting in the Birmingham Town Hall, who hit the right nail when he said, "When it comes to the fighting, the working men have to do it. When it comes to the taxes, we working men have to pay. When it comes to the starving, our wives and children and ourselves have to do the starving!" That man was right. War can never be the friend of the working man, and, therefore, I say we should be advocates of peace.

III. THE NEXT ENEMY I WANT TO POINT OUT IS INFIDELITY.

There are many kinds of infidelity—infidelity to wives, and infidelity to husbands.

But I have to talk to-day about infidelity in religion. I know no enemy of the working man so much to be shunned as infidelity in religion. Infidelity! It is a cold system, like an iron sky, without a rainbow in it. Men tell us that there is no hereafter. Men tell us that we shall die like dogs! Can you believe it? Never! I feel that I have within me the principles of immortality. Die like dogs! We cannot, we will not believe that. Beware, working men, of those who would preach to you what they call free thought and secularism. I tell you what it is like. Suppose I am shut up in a dark dungeon, with only one little ray of light through which God's sunlight can come to me; and while I am there, there comes a man who, in the goodness of his heart, and in the liberality of

his soul, proposes—for my benefit—that this little window shall be shut up! What would I say of that man? I would have a contempt alike for his professions of friendship and for the man. Now, we who are at present shut up in this world have one little ray of light, that comes to us bringing light and gladness—the Bible, and the religion of Jesus which it reveals. This is our window. Men come to us, and, in their charity and liberality! they would shut up the window, rob us of our Bible, of our faith, and take us into the dreary regions of infidelity. Working men, keep your Bibles. Hold fast to your principles; stick to religion. Never give it up for infidelity, which can offer you nothing—which promises you nothing worth having. An infidel was dying. His friends gathered around him, and pressed him to “hold on to the end!” The deluded one said to them, “Tell me what I am to hold on to!” There is nothing in infidelity to hold on to. A number of Frenchmen were travelling with a poor Arab, their guide across the mountains. Whenever any difficulty arose, the poor Arab would go on his knees and pray. When asked by the Frenchmen why he did this, he replied, “To ask God to remove the difficulty.” They asked him further how he knew there was a God. He looked up at them with contempt, and said, “How is it I know a man and a camel passed my hut last night?” One of the Frenchmen said, “I suppose you saw their footprints in the sand.” “Ah!” said the Arab, “I know there is a God, because I see His *footprints* throughout the whole world!” Footprints of God meet us everywhere. We, too, may see His footprints; nay, more, He will come to our poor hearts and change them to be His own. He will bless and ennoble these lives of ours if we will let Him. Shall we not open the door and let Him come to-day?

The Town Clock.

OUTLINE OF A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ADDRESS TO WORKING PEOPLE,
FIRST DELIVERED IN BIRMINGHAM.

MANY years ago I managed to save five shillings and three-pence. I can assure you it was no easy task for me in those days. With it I bought a new watch, not gold, but nearly the colour thereof. I can well remember what a figure I cut with my five-and-threepenny watch. And it was a watch to be proud of. I suppose there are few such watches made as was that. It had one peculiarity, so far as I can remember—it always went three minutes an hour too slow. I altered the regulator often, but with little or no success. The regulator was of the old-fashioned style, and had to be wound round with the watch key. One evening, having nothing better to do, I got out the key and turned the regulator for as near twenty minutes as I can remember, feeling sure that after that it would quicken its pace; but it did not vary one minute.

About the same time I was sent by my master to work in a forest among timber. For a few days we were working some distance from any village, and quite out of hearing of any town clock. Then my five-and-threepenny watch was found very useful. One of the men hung it upon a stake, so that it might act as a clock for us all, and remind us of meal times, and quietly inform us when it was time to leave work for the day. One evening I had the misfortune to forget my watch, and leave it in the wood all night. It was a wild night, not fit even for a *watch* to be out. As I

went to work next morning, I wondered if my watch would have been sharpened up a bit; but there it was, wagging away, three minutes an hour too slow! Like many a human clock, it had its one pace, and was difficult to alter. But I made it go at last, for it went to my *uncle's* for three and sixpence! So far as I was concerned that was the last *go* it ever had, for I never saw it again.

But I must call your attention to the town clock, and clocks in general, or my time will be gone before I get at the subject.

I. NOTICE THAT CLOCKS MARK TIME.

If they do not they are useless as clocks; of course some of them do not keep *good* time, but if they go at all, they should mark time. There are not a few human clocks which do little else with time than waste it. The hours come and go, but all the clocks in Christendom can not make some men feel the value of time. One sometimes thinks it is a pity that such a scarce and valuable commodity as time should be given to those men who only waste it.

II. AMONG CLOCKS THERE IS GREAT VARIETY.

All sizes, shapes, and values. Walk down the city streets and note down how many different kinds of clocks you see in your journey, inside shops and outside, and you will be surprised at the length of your list.

1. *There is the little clock with its neat face and silvery bell, which just strikes once at every hour.*

Little though it be, it ticks away with as much or more assurance than the town clock. There are not a few little men in this world, some of them as good, if not better, than the biggest among us. It is my joy to be indebted for many things to one or two little men I could name.

Little men did I say? The terms *little* and *big*, as applied to men, are very misleading. It may be correct to speak of clocks as *little* and *big*, and we shall not have much danger of being misunderstood. But when you bring the terms to describe man, you must use them with care; you may call a man *little* who is in reality a *giant* in manliness, and you may call a man *big*, who is *big* in nothing but *boast*, *brag*, and *bounce*.

But there are some *little* men in the world for all that, and sometimes it happens that these very *small* men are *large* in their own estimation. In the workshop there are no men can do such work as they can. *Very* likely, I have no difficulty in believing that at all; their work is of such a quality that when trade slackens a little, they are the first to be dismissed!

There are *little* men in churches, and a *great* deal of mischief they sometimes make. There are *little* men everywhere. I hope none of you who hear me are *little* in the sense of which I speak.

2. *There is the good clock, and the bad clock, the former of which keeps good time, the latter of which never will go well, however much you may doctor it.*

Is it not thus precisely with men? Some are good. Thank God for all the good men there are in the world; and perhaps the world holds more of them than we think. We overlook the good very often, and talk loudly about the bad. But there are some bad men as there are bad clocks. There are some bad men here; I am glad to see you, but hope you will try to mend. My Master will help you. I don't think you are altogether bad, but somehow you hide whatever good you may have, and exhibit largely your bad qualities. Won't you try to be better?

For the sake of your wives, your children, your parents; for the sake of your homes, I ask you to try and improve.

For the sake of your character, for the sake of your souls, for Christ's sake I ask you to try and be better. God help you.

3. *Then there is the ornamental clock.*

Many of you purchase this kind of timepiece, hence I need not stop to describe it. There are, I believe, a few men in the world who are only ornamental; at any rate I fail to notice the good they do. As a rule ornamental clocks are useful, as well as ornamental, and the ornamental human clock should do some useful work, or he has no right to a place in this busy world.

I have read of a company of wounded soldiers, sixty-five in all, who lay on the second floor of a barn, just under the roof, which was scorched by a July sun; a good Christian minister was trying to help them, and asked a soldier, who was not wounded, to wash their hands and feet, and thus give them a little relief. "I did not enlist to wash men's feet," was the soldier's reply. "Bring me water then and I will," said the minister. That minister was a *useful* brother. But the soldier, who was, I should think, a corporal, was an ornamental brother.

III. ALL CLOCKS GET OUT OF ORDER.

Many go for a long time and never want repairing. The old family clock, which now stands in the corner of your house, ticking away night and day, has had a long life. It saw your grandfather and grandmother set up housekeeping. It saw a family of children, born, grown, married, and off. It saw the old folks die, and then it was carried to your father's house. It saw you, and all your brothers and sisters born one by one, and then married and off. It was present when the doctor told you that your mother could only live twenty-four hours. How you watched that old clock as it marked off those hours. And how solemnly

it sounded in the night hours as you watched the dying. Tick! Tick!! Tick!!! And the hours were gone. If it could talk, what a tale it would tell. But even the family clock will get out of order.

And so all human clocks get out of order, and sometimes go wrong. Some of us, doubtless, put ourselves out. We eat too much, and get indigestion. We drink too much, and get poverty and misery. We brood over our little misfortunes, and get into the dumps.

Recently, I took my watch to be repaired. When the watch doctor had duly examined it, he said, "You have broken the main-spring." Do not the human clocks get wrong at the main-spring? Our hearts get wrong. That may be regarded as the spring. But even that can be set right. The love of God can change a man's heart. "A new heart also will I give you." May God, for Christ's sake, give us all new hearts.

IV. CLOCKS NEED WINDING-UP.

Some require this every day, others will go for eight days; but they must all be *wound up*. It is so with some human clocks. They are good for nothing until they are wound up. And the trouble is that some human clocks require to be wound *often*. And some take much winding. Half-a-dozen glasses or more scarcely suffice to wind up some, in fact they would not suffice if the dose was not repeated very often. I have seen poor trembling men rushing to get their glasses *hot*, to warm up the old *cold*, before they were good for anything. But, of course, you who now hear me are far *too respectable* for that! Most certainly. But I fear, nevertheless, that some of you were wound quite tight not twenty-four hours ago.

There are some human clocks which are wound-up *far too soon*. They are so irritable, waspy, raspy, that one

single turn of the screw or handle sends them up to the striking-point at once. I have seen a patent roller for window-blinds. There is a single string attached, which you have only to hold and up shoots the blind to the top. Some men much resemble the patent window-blind. Say one word to them, and up goes a bunch of fives for a strike. If one of their children happens to throw a stone and break a fourpenny window-pane, there is a fine fight between father and son, greatly to the discomfort of the latter. As if it were not natural for boys to throw stones and break, not only windows, but sometimes heads.

Should a servant of one of these gunpowder-tempered people happen to break fivepence three-farthings' worth of crockery in six months!—there is a terrible explosion. Or if a poor wife, who has made her last bonnet (which her mother bought her) serve for three years, asks his lordship for money to buy another, he is ready to strike twelve, and bites his lips because he cannot strike thirteen.

I tell you some human clocks are so soon wound to the striking-point that it is not safe to be near them. I remember an old clock of that shape, known in the country as sheep's-head clocks, which always gave us warning about seven minutes before it struck. Now, if some of those crabby men who are so fond of striking would only do as did that clock, and give seven minutes' warning before they strike, we should know when to get clear, and even the poor cat and dog would know in time to get out of reach.

But there are *some* human clocks which *need* a good deal of winding before they can be made to go long, to say nothing of going fast.

And I regret to say that some human clocks which used to go well have run down and stopped altogether. And when we have done our best we cannot get some of them to go again. Many who hear me to-day once ran well, but

something has hindered them. They have lost that love, earnestness, and goodness which they once had. Oh, that I had some word from God that would arouse all such! I can only assure you that God waits to be gracious, that Jesus is ever merciful and kind. Even the wanderer may come back assured of mercy.

V. I NOTICE FURTHER THAT SOME CLOCKS NEVER STRIKE.

They keep good time. Do their work well, but make little noise. They are quite *silent*. That can't be said of all the men I know. Neither can it be said of all who hear me to-day.

Nevertheless, I believe there are far more *good silent* men and women in the world than we sometimes suppose. We are so much accustomed to make a noise, to sound a trumpet ourselves, that we imagine everybody else must do the same. If we have a four-pound loaf to give to a poor neighbour, we rob it of half its sweetness, by telling all who live in the same yard that we have given away a loaf of bread to John Jones. We never think of giving a parcel of left-off clothes to Mrs. Brown unless we first publish the fact far and wide. But I thank God that there are some silent clocks in the world; some who try to act upon the Scripture principle, and not let the left hand know what the right hand doeth. I have found not a few, especially whilst great distress has prevailed, who have given large sums to help the poor, and have been unwilling to let their names be known. I call these silent clocks.

Then I believe, too, there are many good men and women who love the Lord Jesus Christ, but do it in a quiet way, so quiet in fact that few know of it. There have been people who thought that there were no good religious men and women outside the pale of the Church. But we seldom

say that in these days. I believe there may be ; and I call these silent clocks. But I would at the same time urge every one of these to join some religious society. That I hold to be the duty of every believer in Christ.

VI. ALL CLOCKS NEED TO BE STARTED.

It does not matter how grand, great, or costly your clocks may be, if they are to be useful and tell the time of day they must be set going. You make all the different parts, and put them together, each adapted for the work it has to do, but you must set it off.

Surely you need not be told that if you are to do any good in life you must be started. And if you are to have that kind of life which God will approve, you must be started by Him. Some have started in sin, and others gone a long distance down the broad path ; but I urge you to-day to stop, and ask God to set you going in the right way. You mothers, for your own sake, and for the sake of your children, get started in the right track. You fathers, sons, husbands, all who hear me, I beseech you put an end to the course of sin, and ask the Lord Jesus Christ to help you to live better in the future. Get down on your knees to-day, and commit all your ways to the Lord.

Things not Generally Known.

OUTLINE OF A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ADDRESS TO WORKING PEOPLE,
FIRST DELIVERED IN BIRMINGHAM.

I AM not going to tell you any secrets. If I did, I am afraid you would not keep them. I dare not trust a multitude of people with a secret that I really wanted to be kept. If I had anything to say that I wanted everybody to know, then I would tell it to you as a secret, and by tomorrow evening it would be retailed in every workshop and home in the place. I do not want you to suppose it is because there are so many women present. Somebody has said—I forget who it was, but I do not believe him—that “no woman can keep a secret.” Another has said, “No woman can keep her tongue still until her head is taken off.” Now I say that is a vile slander upon the women. I say women *can* keep secrets. I have met with many that can keep them; and if you want a strong proof that they *can*, just go and talk to some *sprightly young lady*, on the shady side of forty-six, who is not engaged, and ask her how old she is, and you will soon discover that she can keep a secret; for it will be utterly impossible for you, either with love or persuasion, to get that from her. I am rather thinking that some of the men are worse than the women. We have proverbs enough about women, but the man is let off pretty free. But this is the misfortune with the men—they tell *all* they know and a great deal more. These, however, are things which you all know—which *are*

generally known ; but now for a few things *not* generally known.

Some time ago, a book was published bearing this title —“Things not Generally Known”—a wonderful book to have in the household ; and if you are setting up, it will be a capital thing to have it. If you happen to get cold, it will tell you how to get warm ; if you are quite well and strong, it will tell you what to get to make you sick ; and if you *are* sick, it will tell you what to get to make you well.

But I turn away from the book and take the title only, and use it in a very much wider sense than the writer of the book ever intended. It will serve us this afternoon in introducing a few general lessons.

I. AND FIRST, IT IS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN, I THINK, THAT SIN IN ALL ITS FORMS DOES NOT PAY, AND THAT RELIGION DOES PAY.

But you say, “Sin *does* pay. I am sure it does. I have tried it for a good many years, and I know it pays !” Yes, and others have tried it, and they find, as I have found, that religion pays better. But some of you say that sin *does* pay—I have known many a man who has got rich by defrauding his neighbours. Sometimes it appears to pay for a while. We had a recent case of a fine pack of gentlemen (?) (excuse the phrase) who had been living largely upon the credulity of other people. They had got all manner of goods, set themselves up as a kind of “long firm,” had grown to be rich, and now one of them, if not more, is doing *penal servitude*, like some of you have done ; only, *you* are out of your time, and the “long firm” gentleman is *in* his. It may appear to pay for a time, but in the end *every form of sin is a losing game*. It is like horse-racing—you generally end the loser. “Oh !” but you say, “I have won many a time.” You have won now and then, I

dare say. Let me ask any horse-racing man here to-day a question. How much richer are you to-day all round than you were ten years ago when you commenced this game? It is no use you pointing out when you have had a good dip. I say how much better are you? I know a man who is a professional better, and has been many years. One day he showed me a handful of money that he had won. But his wife, whom I also know, said, "Mr. Leach, we are no better for his winnings, but worse. Ah! ever since he began horse-racing he has been going to buy me a new dress out of his winnings, but my new dress has never come yet." And this day, I venture to say, that man is poorer all round than when he commenced horse-racing.

You know that as a rule sin is an expensive thing to the *body*. Men who follow pleasure in some of its questionable forms, soon fall victims and perish. You have seen a moth flying round a candle at night. At last it goes through the flame, and its wings are burnt a bit. It has not sense enough to keep away; up it goes again a second time, and perhaps a third time, but falls at last to rise no more. Now you know as well as I know, and some of you very much better, that a man or woman who tampers with vice in any of its forms soon falls, and like the poor moth is ruined and lost.

And then sin as a general rule is expensive to *the pocket*. "Hold hard; that's a tender spot!" I know it is. It is so tender that I cannot get some of you to touch it. I wish I could. But if I can show you that religion helps the pocket, and that sin robs it, then *for some of you*, at least, I have a strong argument. Sin empties the pocket. It empties the cupboard, and *keeps* it empty. It empties our houses, and it empties our bellies. It makes bare backs and bare feet, poor beds, and, at last, sends men to the workhouse; then to—I know not where.

On the other hand, religion is a thing that helps and strengthens the pocket. It teaches you the value of money. Religion teaches a man to use it well. And money, like good seed, increases with the proper use.

Sin is injurious to the *soul*. Whichever way you look at it, sin does not pay. Allow me to say that religion pays better than sin. Of course, I do not want to persuade you men and women to have religion *simply because it is profitable, and because it is cheaper* than sin, but because it brings peace, rest, hope, and joy. It pays well for this life, and better for the life that is to come. And best of all, its blessings and comforts are within the reach of all. God will help and save, and keep every one of us if we will let Him.

II. TO PASS ON A STAGE FURTHER, IT MAY NOT BE GENERALLY KNOWN THAT THE DEVIL IS A BAD MASTER, AND THAT CHRIST IS A GOOD ONE.

Some of you know the devil to be a bad master. What wages does he pay? I wish I could get some of you to say what he pays *you*; but of course you are too bashful to do that in this assembly. You have served him a long time, and what has he paid you? Some of you have been put into "mourning." Let me explain for the benefit of those who do not know what that is. I went into a shop in town the other day to make a purchase, and there came in a woman and bought some article. In going out of the shop she said, "Oh, I will take another for Charlie." She had the worst pair of "black eyes" I ever saw! The shopman said, "I think Charlie has been doing something at her, for he has put her into mourning. Have I not seen some of you in mourning? The devil leads men into quarrels, fights, all kinds of wickedness; robs them of self-respect, takes away all that is *good*, and *pure*, and *noble*.

What did it do for Judas? Christ *gives*, but the devil *takes*. The one *takes*, the other *gives*—gives peace of mind, gives character, leads to the preservation of health, helps the income, saves the soul. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

III. IT MAY NOT BE GENERALLY KNOWN THAT TRUE PEACE IS WITHIN THE REACH OF EVERY ONE OF US.

Now we want peace. We seek for peace and pleasure in different forms, but I say that the highest and best is to be had by every one of us. Do not think for a moment that it can only be had by the rich. It has been my privilege to see men living in the depths of poverty, and yet happy and peaceful. And this peace may be ours. We are all sinners, and Christ, as a Saviour, is not far from us. The nettle stings, but near it grows the dock as the remedy. When the Israelites came to Marah, they found the water very bitter. But, just by the bitter water, there was the tree which the Lord showed them as a remedy. The evil and the remedy growing together! We are guilty, but Divine grace is sent to us. We are sinners, but Christ is a Saviour. He is not afar off, but nigh at hand to all that call upon Him.

Talkers and Workers.

OUTLINE OF A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ADDRESS TO WORKING PEOPLE,
FIRST DELIVERED IN BIRMINGHAM.

You will understand this lecture better, if I first read to you a few words from the book of Exodus, fourth chapter, 10th to 16th verse: "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, . . . but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. . . . And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. . . . And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people."

I am not eloquent! This was the man chosen to reason and discuss matters with a king! Is there not some mistake? Ought not a man who has such a mission to be eloquent beyond his fellows? Surely he should know something of the little tricks of rhetoric, and be able to deliver his message in nice flowing sentences, and cleverly rounded periods. Has not God committed an error in selecting him?

I answer no! Emphatically *no*! The affliction of the Church, society, and the world, in all ages is talkers—mere champagne men, who go off with a fizz. Men who can dazzle us with their rhetorical fireworks, beautiful to look at, but ending in smoke, and lightening no one's burden.

It is not the great talkers the present age demands, but the quiet *thinker*, the patient *inventor*, and the earnest persevering WORKER. These are the men who bless their fellows, and lessen the world's sorrow.

It seems to me that there is something very interesting

in the selection of *Moses* and *Aaron*, the worker and the talker going together. Let us look at one or two lessons which come to us from this choice of *Moses*, who confessed himself "slow of speech."

I. GOD USES IMPERFECT MEN.

And that is an untold blessing. I have met many men, and eaten salt with not a few, but have not yet met the *perfect* man. I have heard tell of two perfect *women*; one is lost and the other can't be found. But a perfect man in these days is as scarce as bank notes, or large orders for merchandise.

All along the ages God has used men with some acknowledged imperfection. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Moses, and a host of others all had their failings. Yet the Lord used them to accomplish His mighty purposes. If we could remember the scarcity of perfect men, perhaps we should not be so ready to crow over the defects of our fellows as some of us now are. I know that some of you take an especial delight in annoying and vexing your fellow workmen. It gives you immense fun if you can get a man who goes to chapel on Sundays into a bad temper. Some men are always looking for defects in their neighbours, and if they can find none, they invent some.

That is a poor occupation. It will pay much better to look at the excellences, and not so much the defects. *Moses* said he could not talk, but see what a great and good man he was.

II. LEARN FROM THIS NOT TO JUDGE MEN BY THEIR WORDS, BUT BY THEIR WORKS.

Words are deceptive. A man may talk well, even religiously, when his heart is full of evil. See those people who are gathered with the Lord Jesus at that house for a

feast. Whilst they are there, a poor woman, who had bought a very costly box of precious perfumery, brought it and poured its contents upon His body. There was one man present who looked on and said, "Why was this waste made? It would fetch more than three hundred pence. What a large number of poor we could have fed with that amount."

Well done, Judas ; that is nice talk. But hear what John says : "This he said, not that he cared for the poor ; but because he was a thief, and had the bag."

Judge men by their *doings*, and not by their sayings. A man, noted for talking at various meetings, and praying that the poor might be fed and clothed, sat in his room, furnished with all the luxuries he could desire. In a cottage, some distance away, sat a widow and her son. The poor boy's feet were bare. He was to receive a prize at the Sunday-school. His mother, anxious to make him as decent as possible, sent him to the gentleman above named, who was his relative, to borrow a small amount of money, with which to buy him a pair of shoes or clogs. The little fellow stood trembling before the man as he stated his errand : "Tell your mother to pay me the seven-and-sixpence she owes me, then send to borrow more."

In a quiet district lived a good Quaker and his wife. One morning the man was troubled as he appeared for breakfast. When his wife asked why he was sad, he told her that he had an impression that one of their neighbours, who lived in a cottage not far away, was in distress. He said he had seen him walking about lately, as if out of employment. He went on to say that he could not be cheerful and take his breakfast if he thought that his neighbour had none. He had said enough. His good wife packed up a basket of provisions and started at once for the cottage.

In the cottage all was sadness. The man, his wife, and little boy sat there in poverty. The wife was a God-fearing woman, and the husband was not a bad man. The wife asked that they might kneel down for prayers. "No," said her husband, "it is no use praying. God does not hear us. If He did, we should not have such poverty as this. I am willing to work, but can get none." Do not be shocked at this, you who are well-to-do. It is easy enough to be thankful when you have plenty ; but wait until your cupboard is bare, and you have no prospect of filling it, then see how strong your faith will be. The wife urged him. They knelt down, and the wife prayed, then the little boy said, "Our Father which art in heaven," &c. The door stood a little ajar. The Quaker lady just arrived as the little fellow was saying, "Give us this day our daily bread." Make the application of this yourself. I tell it that the two cases may be put together, and you left to choose which you would call the better man, he who talked much, but said, "Tell your mother to pay me the seven-and-sixpence," or he who talked little, but sent the food.

Judge men by their works, not by their mere words.

And as you judge men by what they do, so also judge systems by what they do for men, and not merely by what they promise.

Some of you do not care about religion. You are unbelievers, infidels. Well, look at these two, infidelity and Christianity, and judge them, as you do trees, by their fruits.

A good woman, who was about to cross the Jordan which divides this world from the next, was asked how she fared now. "Oh," she said, "my feet are in the river." "Is it deep?" asked one of her friends. "Yes, it is ; but I find there is rock beneath my feet—rock all the way."

Judge Christianity by what it does, and you will be bound to accept it.

III. THEN GREAT WORKERS NEED HELPERS.

Try to remember this. Some of you are anxious for social reforms. There are among us those who work hard to bring us great advantages. Remember they need helpers.

I see here those who are Christians. You belong to various churches. You have ministers who work hard and long. Never sit upon those ministers if they happen sometimes not to please you ; but help them. Every good minister needs helping leaders, deacons, people. Never think you have done your duty when you have paid your pew-rent, and thus provided bread for the minister. And in passing, let me urge upon you the fact that your duty never is done when you have *not paid* the pew-rent. But you have higher duties than these. You are to fill your places, and by your prayers and sympathy help in spreading the light and love of the blessed Gospel. Don't be mere talkers. Work as well as talk. We can do with less talk and more work.

Some of you have talked about altering, turning on to a new page, making a new start ; and still you are only *talking* about it. Begin to work a bit. Show that you really mean to reform by making a start. It will perhaps be hard, but God helps them who help themselves.

Notice to Quit.

OUTLINE OF A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ADDRESS TO WORKING PEOPLE,
FIRST DELIVERED IN BIRMINGHAM.

SOME tenants don't wait for notice, but quit without. Out of consideration for the landlord, or else to escape him, they take up their bed and move by moonlight. If all one hears from the owners of cottages be true, it is better to be without some tenants than with them. I am told that a large number of people have a wonderful knack of locking their doors and taking a walk on Monday mornings, just about the time the rent-collector should appear. You smile. Do you think I am wrong, and that there are no such impostors? Let me tell you, then, a tale of imposition which can scarcely be equalled by any Yankee.

A lady connected with one of your charity organisations said that a woman appealed to their committee for help. She said her husband was lying dead, and that she was destitute, and had not the means to bury him. The ladies heard her pitiful tale, believed it, and came to the conclusion that it was a case requiring immediate help. So they gave her temporary relief, and promised to visit her. One of the ladies went to the address given, and sure enough there was the man, laid out, and covered with a sheet. The house was bare, and, in truth, there was every appearance of the greatest poverty. Further help was given, and the lady left. Shortly after leaving the house the visitor discovered that she had accidentally left her

umbrella behind her, and returned to get it. She walked into the house, and there sure enough was the dead man sitting by the fire, smoking his pipe! You may think what you like, but if those people were tenants of mine, I should give them notice to quit.

I am going to speak to you for a few moments about a foolish tenant, who received a very short notice to quit. The case is this: A certain farmer, whose land produced abundantly, was in a fix what to do with his stores. So great was his harvest, that he knew he could not store all his produce. He therefore determined to pull down, rebuild, and enlarge his barns. Then, when all this shall be completed, he will try to be content and take his ease. But whilst he is thus reckoning up matters, he hears the voice of his landlord telling him that he must quit.

Need I tell you that I am speaking of the man who is usually called the rich fool, of whom we read in the 12th chapter of Luke? I call the man the tenant, God the landlord. I am justified in speaking of man as the tenant of his body. You will doubtless remember that one says, "We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And I think that your own common-sense will teach you that this body is not the man who thinks and reasons.

I. LOOK AT THE FOOLISH TENANT.

On the surface there does not appear to be anything wrong in this man's conduct. When I was a boy, I used to wonder why God called him a fool. And you may be disposed to ask, Where was his folly? Was it in looking well after his land, and making it produce a good crop? Certainly not. It is always prudent to make the best of what we have. It cannot be wrong to grow rich, if we do

so by honest industry. I am always asking you to try to improve your position.

Was his folly in reflecting what to do? No; that, too, is a good thing. And I regret that you don't reflect more. It is for want of this that so many of you go on in a course of sin. There are many really bad men in the world, but I believe that much sin is committed, and much suffering inflicted by men who are not inherently bad, but who are thoughtless. I am quite sure that, if we could only get men to think, they would be better.

Then where *was* his folly? It was in calling the things which he had, *his* own. *My* barns, *my* fruits, *my* goods, *my* soul. He had not realised that he was but a steward. Man is not independent. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price."

It was foolish to leave God out of his reckoning. It was foolish to look only to the future for comfort and enjoyment. He supposed that when he should have enlarged his barns he would be happy and easy. But why not be happy in the present? Ah, that is one of our mistakes. We look forward to some position in the future, and feel that we will be content and happy if we reach it, when all the time our plain duty is to make the best of the present, and leave the future to God. But our poor humanity is weak. This farmer, with his great abundance, looked forward to the time when his storehouses should be considerably bigger. "Man never is, but always to be blessed." You remember the old story of a shoeblack, who saw a butcher's boy on horseback carrying meat to a customer, and said, "I wish I was that butcher's boy, with a horse to ride on, instead of blacking boots." And the butcher's boy saw a youth in an office, and said, "I wish I was a clerk like that youth; then I should not have to ride this horse in all sorts of weather." The youth wished himself

a manager, so that he would not have to sweep the office, &c. Then the manager looked with an envious eye upon a merchant, and thought how happy he should be if only he were a merchant. And the merchant was wishing himself a duke, and the duke was not content, but wished himself the prince, and heir to the throne. And the heir was wishing in his heart that the king would die off out of the way. And the king himself was perfectly miserable, and envied many of his poorer subjects.

I advise you to make the best of your present position, and seek happiness in what you have, and in communion with Jesus Christ. Don't look to the future only for your heaven, but have heaven now. Learn to cultivate a contented disposition, and thank God for what you have. This man had much, but he foolishly took his slate and pencil to write his calculations about more, and left God out of all his reckoning. His little sum lacked the chief factor.

II. LET US NOW BRIEFLY TURN TO THE LANDLORD, AND HIS ESTIMATE OF THE MAN.

As the man sat working out his sum, it seems as if God was looking over his shoulder. And when the man's reckoning was done, God, the Landlord, said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Yes, indeed, whose shall they be? That is a question many men will do well to consider. Whose shall they be?

"Thou fool!" That is very strong language. And it was used by one who knows what is in the heart of man. "This night thy soul shall be required of thee!" *This was a notice to quit.* And there could be no getting out of it. When God speaks let men tremble. Jehovah does not belie His word, as men sometimes do.

It was a short notice. "This night." Only a few hours

to straighten all his affairs. Somehow we feel that we should like a little longer than that, when we have to quit this tabernacle of flesh. At all times it is a serious thing to leave this world, but, as we now see things, it appears a sad thing for sinners to leave at a very short notice. And yet, many do thus quit. Some have not an hour, not a moment given them. Last week I received a letter, which told me of the death of a lady of my acquaintance, who, at a party in her own house, was seen to fall from her chair. When she was lifted up and placed on a couch she sobbed or breathed once, and was dead. Now, I want to ask you, *each one* of you, suppose the Lord in His wisdom should see fit to call you before Him this night, would you be prepared for the summons? I do not ask if you would be willing to go, because I have lived long enough to know that none of us *want* such a thing to happen. But I ask you, are you ready? Has the love of God in Christ Jesus filled your hearts? Do you *know* that you live and move in the Lord? Are you assured that, living or dying, you are the Lord's? These are serious questions, and I leave them to you, praying that you may be able to answer them in the right way. And may the God of Jacob bless you.

How can I know there's a God?

“Canst thou by searching find out God?”—JOB xi. 7.

I DARE say you have often thought about God. Perhaps you have asked your friends these questions: “Who is God? What is He like? Where does He live? How does He act? Does He see all the doings of men? Can He look into the human heart? Where can I find Him? How can I know there is such a Being?”

These questions have occurred to all of us, and they are all of great importance. On the way they are answered for us, and to us, depends our peace in this life and our joy in the life which is to come.

I find that men in all ages have been asking them just as you and I do. As far back as the time of Job it was the same. In chap. xi. verse 7 of his book one asks, “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” This is like your question.

In this address I cannot attempt to answer all the questions raised above. I will take the last, which, in some sense, includes all the rest: “How can I know there's a God?” And in answering this question for you I am not going to assume that you are an atheist. Thousands who believe in God, serve Him every day, and who would not count their life worth living without Him, will be glad to have a plain answer to this question, which will strengthen their own faith and love, and perhaps help them in speaking to others on this grave and solemn subject.

A knowledge of God is necessary. It is the alphabet of all religious doctrine; the root of all theology; the beginning of our religious faith; and the foundation of the Holy Catholic Church. Without God all is strange, dark, cold, and hard. Without God life is a mystery, existence a riddle, the future a blank, and the grave the end of all. With God, our life is ennobled and glorified. With God, existence is bliss, heaven a reality, and the grave the gateway of life more abundant. With God, man finds peace, and sees the mysteries of life made plain in the light of the eternal.

You will see, then, that it is important to have strong faith in God, and I am glad you ask the question, "How can I know there *is* a God?"

I. I KNOW THERE'S A GOD, BECAUSE HE HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO MEN.

In all ages God has spoken to men, and given them a knowledge of Himself. Abraham knew God, and talked with Him as a Friend. Jacob had converse with God, and dreamed dreams, and saw visions. Joseph knew God and served Him so well that others were blessed because of his goodness. God revealed Himself to Moses with such clearness and fulness, that the very bush upon which he gazed was all ablaze with fire and glory. And out of the bush came the voice of the living God, saying, "I AM THAT I AM." All along the ages, God was constantly speaking to men and revealing Himself to His people. Patriarchs, prophets, psalmists, disciples, apostles, all knew there was a God; for they heard His voice, saw His glory, witnessed the displays of His majesty, and felt His power in their souls.

As large numbers of these men gave their lives as witnesses

for God's revelation, I believe their testimony, and am aided in searching to know God for myself.

“ II. I KNOW THERE'S A GOD, BECAUSE HE HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO ME.

And this is the best evidence I can get. But you will say, Are you a prophet, or the son of a prophet, that God has revealed Himself to you? No, I am just a plain man, living for God and testifying for Him with my voice, my pen, and, as far as I can, with my life as well.

Would you be surprised if I said that God has revealed Himself to you, or is willing to do so just as much as He has to me? Let us look at it for a minute. God reveals Himself to me in three ways:—

1. *He reveals Himself to me in His Holy Word.*

When I come to that book I find God in it. It has in it what no man could ever know without God. It tells us about the creation and fall of man; the merciful provision which God made for the salvation of fallen man; and shows us how our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who was God as well as man, opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

In the Bible I find my heavenly Father, and am thankful to hear Him say, “I am God, and there is none else” (Isa. xlv. 22).

2. *He reveals Himself to me in the world in which I live.*

All things reveal God to me. The heavens above my head, with the sun and the fleecy clouds, like flocks of sheep among mountains of snow, reveal God to me. The moon and the countless stars, like so many diamonds in the skies, reveal God to me. The earth beneath my feet, with its vast treasures and marvels, reveals God to me. The flowers

in my garden, the grass in the field, the trees in the forest, the mountains, rivers, seas, and all things on which I look reveal God to me, and say in plainest language, "The hand that made us is divine."

3. *He reveals Himself to me in my own heart, and soul, and life.*

I know God has changed my life. Once I did not love Him. Once I lived away from Him. He has come to me, and lifted me out of the mire and clay and put me on safe ground. I know there is a God, because I can feel Him in my heart.

And this is one of the best ways of knowing God. You need not write a book to prove to me that the sun shines at noon in summer. I *know* it does. I have seen its brightness and felt its glorious warmth. You need not enter into an argument to prove to me that my child loves me. I know it. How do I know it? I have felt its love in my heart. And in this way the Lord Jehovah comes to men. I know there's a God because He has revealed Himself to me.

III. I KNOW THERE'S A GOD, BECAUSE HE MADE THE WORLD.

This will help you, if you look at it quietly and carefully. The world is here around us and about us. Nobody will deny that it exists. But it did not always exist. Where did it come from? *It could not make itself.* It must have had a start. But how did it get the start?

You have seen a forest tree. Look at it. It is, say, a stately oak. What did that oak tree come from? You at once say, From the acorn. And where did the acorn come from? You at once answer, From the oak. Well, then, there must have been a first acorn or a first oak.

Who made that first one? It could not make itself. No one would say it could.

You cannot say that a man made it, because we know he could not. And then we should have to ask who made the first man? It is, then, as clear as anything can be, that the Scripture is correct which says, "Every house is builded by some man; but He that built all things is God" (Heb. iii. 4).

IV. I KNOW THERE'S A GOD, BECAUSE I CAN SEE HIS WISDOM IN THE HARMONY AND DESIGN WHICH EXIST IN THE WORLD.

Wherever you see design, you may be sure there has been a designer. Things do not happen by chance. Suppose, for instance, that a man who had never seen a church in all his life, and who had never heard of one, should suddenly appear in front of mine. Let him come in and look round it. He will see the pews with their bookboards. He will notice that they are placed in rows, many of them. He will see the pulpit, the stalls, the font, the reading-desk with the Bible upon it. He will look at the organ with its row or rows of white keys.

Now ask him to sit in the pulpit and see all the people walk in and sit down. He will watch the preacher enter the pulpit. He will hear the music of the organ as the fingers of the player move across the keyboard.

What would such a man say of the church? He would conclude that the whole place had been designed for the purpose it serves. He would at once feel that this building we call a church must have had an architect who had been able to adapt the place for its present use.

And, in like manner, when I see such marvellous design in the world, I am forced to believe in a designer: that designer is God. Look at the fin of the fish, the wing of

the bird, the foot of the camel—these are all wonderfully full of design and adaptation. Look at the human eye, the human ear, and a thousand things beside. They all proclaim their maker and designer—God.

V. I AM CONFIRMED IN MY KNOWLEDGE OF GOD WHEN I LEARN THAT MEN EVERYWHERE HAVE BELIEVED IN GOD.

Go wherever you will, you will find men who believe in God. Men have been found without towns, without houses, without churches, without schools, without clothes, but scarcely, if ever, found without gods. Rather than be without God, man will make one. The universal failing of man has not been to have no God, but rather to have too many. How is this? Does it not seem as if the idea of God were born in man?

These are some of the reasons why I am able to say I know there is a God. And they seem to me good and sufficient. And I believe if you will give them their due weight in your consideration, you too will be able to say, and say with intelligence and force, "I know there is a God. He has revealed Himself to me. I have felt His power in my soul. I love Him with all my heart, and have delight in His service. This God is my God, even for ever more."

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